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Thomas A. James

At the CASA NAPOLEON

BY

THOMAS A. JANVIER

AUTHOR OF
"THE AZTEC TREASURE-HOUSE" ETC.

WITH PORTRAIT
AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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BOOKS BY
THOMAS A. JANVIER

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TO
A. G. H.

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PREFACE

IT was not a house of phantasy, this cosmopolitan Casa Napoléon, but a very definite haven for wanderers of Latin origin which for several years opened hospitable doors upon a side-street near lower Fifth Avenue. To this house it was the custom of Mr. Janvier to come, and it was during dinners which he planned with supreme art that his close but kindly observation garnered suggestions which ripened under the sunshine of his humorous fancy into the fruition of this book.

At the Casa Napoléon adds another picture to Mr. Janvier's interpretations of New York, which he loved peculiarly, although his birthplace was Philadelphia, his blood was of the Midi, and old London was always held close in his affection.

Thomas Allibone Janvier was born in Philadelphia, July 16, 1849, the son of Francis de Haes and Emma Newbold Janvier, the descendant of Huguenot forbears from the South of France, whose racial characteristics he retained so clearly that he was greeted as one of the soil when he first visited Provence. From 1870 to 1881 he was chiefly occupied with editorial work upon various Philadelphia newspapers; after that he devoted himself to literary work, and New York became his home, with the exception of travels in Mexico, a long stay in the South of France, and many visits abroad.

When Mr. Janvier came to New York, about 1881, to

enter definitely upon a literary career, there was something very like a Latin Quarter in the neighborhood of Washington Square. To the south there was a French Quarter, where various simple, old-fashioned French restaurants attracted artists; to the north there was an artist colony. There was the old Studio Building at 51 West Tenth Street, and across the street in a rear courtyard was a little house which was the home of the once famous Tile Club. To the west stretched old Greenwich Village. The simple and honest Bohemianism of the Quarter gave a color to its life which attracted Mr. Janvier, and an early result was the production of his tales of artist life, familiarly known as the Ivory Black Stories. They appeared in the magazines and afterward in his first book, entitled *Color Studies*, published in 1885. They attracted attention immediately on account of their warmth, richness, humor and felicity of diction, qualities which always distinguished Mr. Janvier's work. His style was as unusual as his superb personal appearance. His feeling for effects was that of a Frenchman rather than an American, or, more definitely, he showed a happy and glowing imagination characteristic of the Midi.

Mr. Janvier rejoiced in color, and it seemed natural that he should presently betake himself to Mexico and to our Southwest. One result was his *Mexican Guide Book*, published in 1887, which was called a new discovery of Mexico. The picturesque history and environment, which appealed to him so strongly, found ample expression in his romance, *The Aztec Treasure-House*, and in his *Stories of Old New Spain*.

A few years later, the sunshine in his blood responding to the sunshine of the Midi drew him to the South of France. There his affinity was recognized, and he was adopted by the poets and writers, whom he quickly

learned to know. He became a warm friend of Mistral, the Provençal poet, and he was made presently an honorary member of the Felibrige, that inspiring and honorable society of poets and men of letters.

In 1878 he had married Catharine Ann Drinker, who shared to the full his devotion to art and letters. While they were living at Saint Remy de Provence their friendship with Félix Gras brought them an opportunity of reading the manuscript of his *Reds of the Midi.* It was through their appreciation that the work of Gras was brought to the attention of an American editor and his books, admirably rendered into English by Mrs. Janvier, were made known to the English-speaking world. Mr. Janvier wrote of the Midi with an understanding and an enjoyment which, perhaps, no English-speaking writer has equalled. It was this same delightfully human zest that was felt in his genius for friendship and also in the quaint seriousness of his devotion to the gourmet's highest arts.

His life in the Midi yielded various magazine articles and stories, all characterized by intimate appreciation. Among the books of this time were *An Embassy to Provence* and *The Christmas Kalends of Provence.* He spent three years (from 1894 to 1897) in his beloved Midi.

From 1897 to 1900 he lived for most of the time in England, deeply interested always in old London. Later his home was in New York, with the exception of frequent visits abroad. The attraction which the past of New York held for him found expression in his book entitled, *In Old New York,* published in 1894.

In 1898 he returned to the vein of pure romance illustrated in *The Aztec Treasure-House* and published *In the Sargasso Sea.* His interest in his adopted home and his intimate knowledge of its history was shown again in *The Dutch Founding of New York,* published

in 1903, and also in his life of Henry Hudson, published in 1909. In this field his contribution to American history was very definite and serious. His later books were *Legends of Mexico*, published in 1910, and *From the South of France*, published in 1913. Mr. Janvier's rich productiveness is illustrated not only in the list of his books, but also in the sustained quality of his numerous contributions to *Harper's Magazine* and other periodicals. It was on June 18, 1913, in New York, that he finally laid aside a pen which he had used always with dignity and honor.

Mr. Janvier's style was absolutely individual. The mellowness and quaintness of his expressions showed no sign of the care which he expended upon the choice of the right word. He was a stylist in so far as felicity of diction, and the selection of the best possible word always seemed to him deserving of infinite painstaking. He worked slowly, but the word and the phrase when they had satisfied his finely critical judgment showed no trace of pedantry and left nothing to be added. His themes included artist life, the rich sunshine of the Midi, the picturesqueness and adventure of Mexico legends, the romantic in history, and the earlier and quainter years of New York. Mr. Janvier honored his craft, and, taking the art of writing as seriously as he did, he maintained always the best traditions of the literary artist. His punctiliousness and conscientiousness and his keen sense of honor were impressed upon all those who knew him. In his attitude toward his work, in his style, and in the rich quality of his personal expression the place which he made for himself in letters and in his wide cosmopolitan circle of friends was absolutely individual.

RIPLEY HITCHCOCK.

NEW YORK, *May, 1914.*

AT THE CASA NAPOLÉON

AT THE CASA NAPOLEON

I



N the matter of the name there had been a compromise. Madame, whose birthplace was Toulouse, and whose love for the Corsican dynasty that had ruled her native France amounted to adoration, was hotly for calling their establishment the Hôtel Napoléon. Don Anastasio, on the other hand—being so devotedly attached to his native country that he had been fairly whirled out of it by a revolution in which he had engaged for its betterment, and having, moreover, an eye for a name attractive to his fellow Spanish Americans—was equally hotly for calling it the Casa Mexicana.

Now the voting rights of the parties in interest—experience on the one side, capital on the other—were very nicely balanced. Madame had been engaged for five years in keeping a small hotel in South Fifth Avenue. It had been a flourishing hotel, well thought of and well frequented by her fellow-country-

men sojourning in New York; and she had flourished with it. But what with the unannounced departure of certain of her lodgers who left behind them large unpaid bills, and a fire that had wrought havoc with her uninsured furniture, and the inconsiderate sickness and death of her husband—it had been a marriage of convenience, Monsieur had been her cook—her fortunes of a sudden changed direfully. She was plunged, in short, from a very reasonable height of prosperity into a depth of adversity that she believed at the moment to be nothing less than bottomless. All that remained to her was her well-earned knowledge of how a hotel should be kept; but that she could make this knowledge practically valuable by obtaining another hotel, and keeping it, seemed to her in her despairing state a hopeless impossibility.

It was at this stage of proceedings that Don Anastasio, being then freshly exiled from Mexico, made to Madame a formal offer of his heart, his hand, and the rather tidy sum of silver dollars that he had been lucky enough to save out of the wreck of his revolution and had brought with him into his banishment. They would be married, he said, and they would found a hotel that among hotels would become glorious and memorable. "Marriage," he declared, "was a natural right enjoyed by man," which fact, he pointed out, was set forth in the second law of the first book of the *Siete Partidas* of Don Alonzo the Wise, King of Castile; and in the introduction to the fourth book of that imperishable work, he added, it was written: "This order of matrimony was by God's own self established, and for

this reason is it the most noble and the most honorable of the Seven Sacraments of the Holy Church. And therefore," Don Anastasio quoted in triumphant conclusion, "it should be kept and honored, because it is the first sacrament that was made and ordained by God Himself in Paradise—which Paradise hath ever since remained marked out as its natural abiding-place and home." Don Anastasio had been bred a lawyer; and of all his law-books none pleased him so well as the *Siete Partidas*. In it, he declared, and with justice, was to be found the whole sum of human wisdom.

Had Madame manifested a disposition to reject his suit, Don Anastasio was prepared with a further strong array of quotations from the *Siete Partidas* that must inevitably have proved convincing. But Madame was too sincerely grateful to him for extricating her from her difficulties to manifest any more hesitation in accepting his offer than the seemly decorum of a widow of a husband of convenience required. And so, these perfunctory scruples being set aside without King Alonzo's assistance, she yielded to Don Anastasio's combined lover-like and business-like persuasions easily.

Don Anastasio was a personable man, tall, commanding, dignified, and exhibiting at all times a gravely courteous air that would have done credit to a count. Madame—short, trimly rounded, brisk, and cheery to a degree—was not in the least dignified. But Madame was delightful—as was plain to anybody with half an eye for what a plump little French widow should be. As for her good nature,

it was as lasting as a summer day is long. Therefore these two made a well-looking couple when Madame, throwing aside her mourning before it had even begun to grow rusty, blossomed out once more into the most lively array of colors and became Don Anastasio's wife. In the upper circles of Franco-American and Spanish-American society, resident in South Fifth Avenue and Macdougal Street, and thereabouts, the wedding made quite a stir.

It was in the days immediately preceding the wedding that the compromise was reached in regard to the name of the hotel; and it is not surprising, the circumstances of the case being considered, that substantial victory rested upon the banners of Madame. As she somewhat sophistically represented to Don Anastasio, the use of the word *casa* would sufficiently indicate to his fellow-countrymen and to Spanish-Americans generally that the hotel was one at which both Spanish dishes and the Spanish tongue would be served, while Napoléon would be a name to conjure with in the matter of the French trade. And she also made the strong point that she had a right to choose the more important portion of the name of the hotel because she knew how to keep it, while to Don Anastasio hotel-keeping—in common with business of every sort, saving only the profession of Spanish-American law, and the trade of Spanish-American revolution, neither of which could be very successfully carried on in the city of New York—was a hopeless mystery. Don Anastasio was no match for Madame in argument; he was too gallant to rest his rights upon his

having rescued her from her most grievous plight of poverty; and for once he was unable to produce a law from the *Siete Partidas* that would resolve the matter in hand in accordance with his views. While he still was fumbling in the dusk of the thirteenth century for the assistance that Alonzo the Wise declined to give, Madame said briskly: "It is then decided!" And so it was.

Therefore when the announcement of the new Franco-Spanish-American hotel was made in the *Courrier des États Unis*, the name under which that hostelry figured, and by which it subsequently achieved a well-earned fame, was the Casa Napoléon.

II

But the story of the founding and of the naming of the Casa Napoléon had come to be ancient history when Mr. and Mrs. John Rayford — to whom New York was a very foreign city, and to whom, also, a very low-priced hotel was an economic necessity — drifted one bright June morning within its hospitable doors. The crest of the wave of economy on which they rode, to pursue the marine simile, was so high that it carried them fairly up three flights of stairs, and stranded them at last in the smallest room on the fourth floor. Had there been a fifth floor in the Casa Napoléon, they would have been carried one story higher.

Mrs. John Rayford, whose godfathers and godmothers in baptism had bestowed upon her the

singularly inappropriate name of Prudence, was charmed by the exceeding novelty of her surroundings. On this head she expressed herself with a characteristic volubility and frankness.

"Why, it's perfectly delightful, Jack," she said—she had hung her hat on one of the three hooks on the door, and was standing in front of the very small looking-glass patting her hair into proper shape. It was fluffy brown hair, with bright tones in it where the light caught it, and there was a good deal of it. "I've never seen any place that began to be so queer and so funny. The very name of it makes you feel ever so far away from everywhere; and the way that people were talking all sorts of languages to each other while we were waiting in the parlor was just like what it must have been at the Tower of Babel. Don't you think that it is a lovely place, Jack?"

Jack was sitting on the bed, filling his pipe and looking admiringly at the pretty picture that his wife presented as she stood before the glass, with both arms raised, tightening her hair-pins. He lighted his pipe, clasped his hands comfortably round his right knee, leaned back a little, and answered with emphasis, "Yes, I do!"

"And do you know, Jack," Prudence continued, "coming to this delightful little hotel, that makes me feel as though I were traveling in several foreign countries at once, has put an idea into my head? Yes, I intend to perfect my knowledge of foreign languages. I know a little French already—didn't you notice how pleased the chambermaid seemed to be just now when I thanked her for the towels



"WHY, IT'S PERFECTLY DELIGHTFUL, JACK"

in her own native tongue? But I shall bend my energies most strongly in the direction of Spanish, Jack; and I mean that you shall study Spanish too. When your rich half-uncle—whom you won't believe in at all, and whom I believe in implicitly—comes home at last from South America, just think how pleased he will be to find us talking the language that all these years he has been accustomed to."

"Suppose he has been living in Brazil, and speaks Portuguese?" Jack put in.

"And if you succeed in getting something to do that pays pretty well," Prudence went on, without regard to this interruption, "so that we always will be easy in our minds about paying the board—and I'm sure you will, you dear boy—I don't care if we stay here for a whole year. We ought to know Spanish perfectly in a year, I should think. And just think, Jack, what a nice place this would be to bring your half-uncle to in case you should find him suddenly—and I suppose you will find him suddenly when you find him at all. After all these years in South America, he certainly would feel much more at home in a place like this than he would in an American hotel, with everybody talking English. And what fun it will be, Jack, when you really do find him at last! Of course he must have made a tremendous fortune by this time; and of course he will want to leave it all to you; and of course, in the mean time, he will want to provide for you very handsomely. How much, Jack—*about* how much do you think he will think he ought to allow to his only half-sister's only son?"

"In view, you mean, of his devoted love for his only half-sister's whole father, and of the constant tenderness manifested toward him by that connection by marriage through a considerable term of years?"

"Don't be provoking, Jack. I know that he and your grandfather didn't exactly take to each other, and that it was because they couldn't get along together comfortably that he ran off to California, and then drifted so far away into South America that he never came home again. But he certainly was very fond of your grandmother, Jack. You can see that in his letters. And it was only when she died that he stopped writing, and so you lost track of him. I am sure that he must yearn for the love of the little half-sister whom he sends such nice messages to in those old letters; and I can fancy what a comfort it will be to him to find that, although she is dead, he still has left to him her son—"

"Whom he never laid eyes on, never even heard of, and whom—for my mother was not married until years after the letters stopped—he would not even know by name. Of course he does, Prue, my dear, and I have only to find him (and, supposing him to be still alive, I haven't the least notion where to look for him), and then to mention my name to him (which, as I have just explained, he cannot possibly recognize), in order to receive an immediate gift of half a million down, and the positive promise of his entire estate upon his decease—to the entire exclusion of the claims of his South-American wife, and of the seventeen children of his own who have been born in the mean time!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Prudence, in a tone of much concern, "you don't think he is married and has children of his own? Uncles, and I should think half-uncles, who wander off into foreign countries this way *never* get married, Jack. Truly, you don't think that he is married, do you?"

"I think that you are rapidly taking leave of your senses," Jack answered promptly; "and I also think that before you grow quite raving we will go down-stairs and get our dinner. Come along, Prue; very likely Half-uncle William came up on the last steamer from South America, and is stopping here at the Casa Napoléon, and is down-stairs at this very moment waiting for us."

"I wish that just once in a while, Jack, when I am perfectly serious and very much interested in something, you wouldn't make fun of me. And I do wish," Prudence added a moment later, "that you would learn to kiss me without hugging so hard, and without all mussing my hair up just after I have fixed it. The very first thing that I shall ask your half-uncle to do, after we have found him, is to teach you better manners." And then they went to dinner.

III

There was an agreeable down-at-heel air about the Casa Napoléon, that to persons educated to an understanding of the true meaning of the word comfort was largely promising. In the course of the years which had passed since Don Anastasio's revolution-

ary Mexican silver dollars had been spent in its furnishing, the kindly touch of Time had toned down the too lively colors of the chairs and carpets and wall-paper and curtains, all of which had been selected in accordance with Madame's vivid taste; and the same mellowing influence had worked to bring the management of the little hotel and the requirements of its numerous patrons into a pleasing harmony. Ostentatious display was ignored; comfort was insisted upon. The whole creed of Madame was comprehended in two items: cleanliness and a good cook. The first of these articles of faith she enforced personally; the second was a more tender point with her—for the place in the kitchen vacated by the untimely death of Monsieur, her husband of convenience, never had been filled precisely to her mind. Don Anastasio's sole cause for jealousy was the frequent invocation by Madame—when affairs in the cooking department went wrong—of the culinary wraith of his predecessor in the possession, not of Madame's affections, but of her commissarial esteem. There were times when Don Anastasio thought that this devotion to an ideal defunct cook was carried too far; but at such times he found solace in referring to the Sixth Partida of King Alonzo, and therefrom drawing the broad generalization that the actual rights of the living are superior to the supposed rights of the dead.

And, in truth, it was because her standard was an ideal one that Madame was not more entirely satisfied with the fare that her kitchen provided. Guided by her own knowledge of what good French

cooking should be—and Madame, it must be remembered, was born in Toulouse—and being instructed from time to time by intelligent persons from southern lands in the composition of delicacies dear to the Spanish-American palate, her table was one that the frequenters of much more pretentious hotels in New York very well might have smacked their lips over.

And Don Anastasio—of a Sunday, as he packed his lean person full of *huevos en tortilla con chile* and *mole de guajolote*, and laid a substantial layer of delicious *guisados* and delicately fried *frijoles* over all —certainly did smack his lips most heartily. And at the same time did he thank all the saints in the calendar (for Don Anastasio was a religious man in his later years) for the rich return that his investment of revolutionary silver dollars was bringing him in. On such festive occasions (when additional good fortune made this possible) he would turn to his old-time revolutionary companion, the Señor Estrano, and would say, with his mouth full of *mole:* "This is better than fighting the pestilent Comonfort, old friend!" And the Señor Estrano, also with his mouth full of *mole*, would answer thickly but heartily: "*De veras, señor!*" And then, but with a little sigh for the *pulque* that fitly and deliciously belongs with *mole*, but that is a delight unobtainable outside of Mexico, they would drink to each other in deep draughts of the honest red wine (Madame herself saw to its honesty) of Bordeaux.

But it was not often that Don Anastasio was cheered by the presence of his old-time companion

in the wars. The Señor Estrano, usually addressed and referred to as Don Guillermo, had been whirled out of Mexico by the same revolution that had sent Don Anastasio flying northward; but his own flight had been toward the south. He had come to a halt in Venezuela, and—possessing the business faculties which Don Anastasio so conspicuously lacked—he had there acquired a coffee-plantation, and, in course of years, had grown to be a person of substance. As he frankly told Don Anastasio, no reasonable man could be expected to absent himself often, or for long at a time, from the easy life and heavenly climate of Venezuela for the rasping life and abominable climate of New York. Don Anastasio had spent a stray half-year in Caracas, and so knew that what his friend declared was true.

Yet would not Don Anastasio give up his friendship—though in preserving it he took direct issue with King Alonzo, for that monarch expressly sets forth, in the seventh law of the Fourth Partida, that a legitimate reason for breaking a friendship is that accident has carried one friend or the other to dwell in distant lands. Fortunately, it was possible to compromise the matter without disobedience to the *Siete Partidas* (for the clause is not mandatory), and without disrespect to the King of Castile (to whom the facilities of travel by steam-power were unknown). Every year or two, in the interest of his coffee dealings, and for love of his old friend, Don Guillermo came northward; wisely timing his journeyings so that he should spend the month of October in New York—at which partially pleasant

season no great stretch of the imagination would be required to fancy himself at home in Venezuela with the weather at its worst. And during these most happy visits the two old boys had rarely good times together—as they feasted on the good things which Madame provided for them, while they fought over again jovially their long-past campaigns.

Nor had Don Anastasio any lack of good company even in the seasons when his well-beloved companion in arms was in his far-off home. The fame of the Casa Napoléon had gone abroad into the distant regions of the South, and into and out of its hospitable doorway there was ever a steady flow and ebb of travellers from and to the Spanish islands and the Spanish Main. Among these wayfarers Don Anastasio found a plenty of good talking mates; and the friendliness that grew up between the host and the patrons of the little hotel was shown by the hearty huggings and back-pattings when they departed; and by the still warmer demonstrations of a like nature when, as often chanced, these same patrons came again.

Among the travellers who frequented the Casa Napoléon, Madame's fellow-country-folk were few. But among the French residents in New York—whose home, for the most part, was southward and westward of Washington Square—the hotel was most honorably known and most highly esteemed. It was here that dinners of estate were given, and breakfasts of betrothal, and also wedding breakfasts—at which latter it was hard to tell whether the young bride or the young groom suffered the greater

tortures of confusion by reason of the very highly spiced wit that was let loose by Madame's rare old burgundy; and at which, certainly, only the fathers and mothers and other elderly people had a really good time. In addition to the very profitable business which this class of custom afforded, certain well-to-do persons—for the most part gray-headed, and come to the time of life when the bourgeois Frenchman frankly surrenders himself to the pleasures of the throat—came regularly to Madame's well-spread board to dine. Of an evening, both the dining-room proper—in which the ordinary of the hotel was served—and the restaurant adjoining it, set with a dozen little tables, were crowded. As to the smells which pervaded the Casa Napoléon about dinner-time, and even were wafted out into the street by the frequent opening of its doors, they were of a nature so savory and so mouth-watering that St. Anthony himself would have succumbed to them! In a small way, too, the Casa Napoléon had a *clientèle* of Americans. They were not very distinguished Americans—a few newspaper people and artists, and some ladies and gentlemen connected with the minor regions of the stage—but they were of a sort to appreciate clean rooms at moderate prices, and capital breakfasts and dinners at half a dollar, and a table wine at twenty-five cents the half bottle that, at least, did not absolutely make one's mouth pucker. In accordance with the easy-going ways of their kind, and of the hotel itself, these slipshod Americans were on friendly talking terms with each other, and with such of the fre-



HE WAS A GENTLE, KINDLY OLD BOY

quenters of the Casa Napoléon in general as spoke a language that they could understand.

Among the various far from taciturn persons composing this less choice than curious collection of humanity, Don Anastasio, who dearly loved a dish of friendly talk, never was at a loss to find somebody to have it with. In the course of his wanderings he had acquired as extensive and as fragmentary a vocabulary as goes to the make-up of a Levantine courier; and (save when conversing in his native Spanish) he put together his fragments with as little care as to where the pieces came from as though—with *Sir Nathaniel* and *Holofernes*—he had been at a great feast of languages and had stolen the scraps. For all the fire of his revolutionary youth—and a good deal of this fire still remained in his composition—he was a gentle, kindly old boy, with a mellow voice that had a friendly ring in it, and a yellow, wrinkled face on which there came easily a very friendly smile. As to the actual management of the hotel, he knew no more about it than a babe in arms; but he was useful because, under Madame's directions, he kept the accounts, and still more useful because of the good impression that his genial ways and kindly manners made upon all who came within his gates.

The real manager of the hotel, of course, was Madame. She was at all times and in all seasons at the very top and bottom of it. In the kitchen she braved the *chef* in his most peppery moods in order to enforce her mandate that justice should be done to her patrons without, by extravagant wasteful-

ness, doing injustice to herself. In the upper regions of the house she watched with a ceaseless vigilance the ways of Marie, the sprightly French chambermaid—compelling on the part of that far too good-looking young person a maximum of application in the matters of careful bed-making and sweeping and dusting, and a minimum of flirting with the male lodgers. And in the dining-room, where the Cuban negro, Telésforo, waited upon the Spanish-speaking portion of the household, and in the restaurant where the public at large was waited upon by the one-eyed waiter, Léon, was apparent, in the precision and the excellence of the service, the good effect of the just but severe discipline maintained by Madame. In a word, it is not to be believed that, as Madame conducted it, a more comfortable little hotel than the Casa Napoléon was to be found in all the stretch and compass of the world.

That this was the opinion of its patrons was made manifest by the persistence of their patronage. Old Monsieur Duvent, who was the dealer in a small but flourishing and very respectable French gaming establishment in South Fifth Avenue, had eaten his dinner and drunk his half bottle of Pontet Canet in the restaurant every night for many years—Don Anastasio and Madame regarded him almost as a brother. For more than nine years, with as much of regularity as the exigencies of his practice permitted, Dr. Théophile Laurencet had come around twice daily from his near-by office in Macdougal Street for his two substantial daily meals. Dr. Théophile was a French creole from the island of

Guadelupe, whose brusque manner and disposition to cynical forms of speech by no means concealed the intrinsic gentleness of his nature and the rare goodness of his heart. His practice—among the French-speaking and Spanish-speaking and Italian-speaking residents of the shady quarter of the town in which he lived—brought him small returns in money; but it won for him, and deservedly, great gratitude and love. It was rumored that Dr. Théophile had left his native Guadelupe because of a sad blight that there had fallen upon his affections in his youth; wherefor all the women had an especial tenderness for him, and readily condoned his caustic comments upon the foibles of their sex—well knowing that these comments were but inverted compliments to their sex's power and charm. For five years—excepting only in summer, when she betook herself to the watering-places—Mrs. Myrtle Vane, who did society news and special articles for several New York newspapers, and also out-of-town correspondence, had been a regular lodger and boarder. Mrs. Mortimer—who politely was supposed to be a capitalist in a small way, and who certainly seemed to be a person of leisure, had rented the best room in the house for four years—and during this period had given so many little suppers in her apartment that Madame had come to look upon her quite in the light of a gold-mine. For six years Colonel Withersby, whose business was that of a promoter, and who mainly devoted himself to promoting South-American tramway enterprises, had made the Casa Napoléon his headquarters in New York, and

also had been the means of bringing to that establishment a large number of profitable South-American customers. Miss Violet Bream and Mr. Claude Dunbar—known, and justly esteemed, off the stage as Ned Harrison and Polly his wife—made the Casa Napoléon their home when they were lucky enough to have a New York engagement: and the gay little dinners and suppers that this merry and most hospitable couple gave when they happened to have the money for such festivities had made the hotel most favorably known to a wide circle of their professional acquaintances.

The newspaper men and the artists were the least to be depended upon of Madame's clients—but this was less their fault than their misfortune. It is not every newspaper man, still less every artist, in New York who occupies a position of such assured easy affluence as to be able to go every night of his life to an ordinary whereat, without wine, the charge is half a dollar. All that can be said of the regularity of these literary and artistic customers of the Casa Napoléon is that they never willingly missed a dinner there on a night when they possessed the half-dollar necessary to pay for it. And the confidential statement may be added that some of them not infrequently got their dinners even when their half-dollars were but desirable possibilities of a doubtful future—for Madame, as is the way the world over with plump, round little women, had within her ample breast a warm and very kindly heart.

AT THE CASA NAPOLÉON

IV

Had Mr. John Rayford and Prudence, his misnamed wife, known New York thoroughly, instead of being absolute strangers to it, they could not have found for themselves a more fitting abiding-place, all things considered, than fate found for them when it brought them to the Casa Napoléon. A not more costly shelter, even a less costly shelter, they could have found elsewhere; but nowhere else could they have found a dwelling-place where they and their fellow-boarders would have been so harmoniously agreed in living in the present on discounts of the future while building and inhabiting castles in the air. Excepting in the case of the few prominent patrons of the establishment already named—who were *rangés* and well provided for—it is a solemn truth that almost every one of Madame's customers was engaged in a gay battle with fate for nightly bed and daily board. Master Jack and Mistress Prudence were about to begin this same battle; and they were marching to it in the merriest possible manner and with the very lightest of hearts.

Jack had known for several years—partly from inborn conviction, partly from the assurances of his widowed mother, whose pride was great in him—that he was doing himself injustice by not giving the exceptional business capacity that he possessed opportunity to expand in a broader field. Therefore he decided, when such decision was open to him—his mother being more than a year dead, and the

need that he should provide a sure support for her being so ended—that he would forsake the very insignificant town in the Susquehanna Valley where all his life had been spent, and go to a city big enough to give his genius the chance that it wanted to swell. For him to continue, at a salary of only twelve hundred dollars a year, to serve as general-utility-man in the counting-house of the car-building establishment with which he was connected, he concluded, was a sheer waste of his valuable time.

And so when Prudence—thereby giving, without in the least intending such rudeness, the lie direct to her godfathers and godmothers in baptism—accepted this view of the situation, and consented to marry him and to assist him in acting upon it, he not unnaturally believed that his fortune was as good as made. The faith that Prudence reposed in his genius was even firmer than that which his mother had placed in it. And there was no one to check her in demonstrating her faith in this rash fashion, for her sole relative in the world was a luckless step-father—whose ventures at making a living by keeping a country store landed him at irregular but brief intervals in bankruptcy; and whose interest, therefore, strongly prompted him to relieve himself of all useless responsibilities. So Jack and Prudence had a pretty little wedding in the country church, one sunny April day that had never a shiver in it; and in the afternoon of that same day they made a wedding journey just six hours long that ended in New York. As they crossed the river in a Jersey City ferry-boat, Jack looked at New York approvingly

—and wondered pleasantly to himself how much of it he was likely to own at the end of the next ten years. He had heard that the Fifth Avenue Hotel was a fairly satisfactory establishment as hotels go, and in order to give style to his arrival—and also in order to avoid losing his way—they drove thither in a carriage. His hand trembled a little as he registered "John Rayford and wife." It was a thrilling sort of experience to announce to all the world, in this fashion, that he was married. They already had eaten one dinner that day, and it was something of a surprise to them to find that the hotel people expected them to eat another.

Jack had decided that before he took any steps toward establishing himself in the financial world of New York they would spend a few weeks in amusing themselves and in looking around. He felt that in honor of his wedding he was entitled to a holiday; and there was no need for him to go to work in a hurry, for he had nearly seven hundred dollars in cold cash—for Jack had been prudently saving his salary in the past year, and a little legacy of four hundred dollars had come to him from his mother. Prudence regarded herself in the light of a young person who was absolutely rolling in riches; for her stepfather—out of the funds which he had plucked, like brands from the burning, from his latest bankruptcy—had made her a wedding present of fifty dollars, which was a larger sum than she ever had hoped to own at one time even in her dreams.

It is probable that two young people never had a better time in New York than Jack and Prudence

had during their first week in that city. In their hotel they had a delightful little apartment, the windows of which looked out over Broadway and Fifth Avenue and Madison Square; they drove in the various parks; they made expeditions on the rivers and the bay; they went to the art-galleries and to the museums; they visited several shops and treated themselves to a pleasing amount of purple and fine linen; they fared sumptuously every day; and every blessed night they went to a fresh theatre. Prudence declared that it was altogether too good to be true; and advanced the metaphysical theory that they must be a prince and princess disguised not only from the world, but even from themselves!

At the end of the week, when Jack was called upon to pay his hotel bill, that included carriage hire, and found that it was a trifle over ninety dollars, he also concluded that their life was too good to be true—but on grounds much less metaphysical. They held a merry little council of war in their pretty apartment—for even allowing for the additional sixty or seventy dollars that had gone for raiment and theatres and incidentals, they still had a vast amount of money left—and decided at once that they would move into cheaper quarters. That very afternoon the move was effected; and by night they were established in a room, that for all practical purposes was as comfortable as the apartment that they had vacated, in a small hotel on Broadway, where they paid for board and lodging what by contrast seemed to them the very reasonable price of forty dollars a week. Prudence decided—while they were eating

a very satisfactory dinner, at which they treated themselves to a half bottle of champagne in celebration of their successful abandonment of extravagant ways—that it would be more in keeping with their present state should they regard themselves as a disguised baron and baroness.

Pushing still further their schemes for economical retrenchment, they hired no more carriages, and they made a point of taking all their meals in their hotel; and they were circumspect in the matter of miscellaneous purchases. But they kept up their theatre-going with undiminished ardor, and still continued their liberal system of sight-seeing.

Their second week in New York, all told, cost them seventy-five dollars. It was a great saving over their first week; but when Jack had added up his accounts he looked a little grave over the total. However, he would get to work soon; and as he had heard a great deal about the high salaries paid in New York he felt that his future was entirely secure. The third week they went but twice to the theatre; and were so prudent in the matter of their incidental expenses that their total outlay was only sixty dollars. Jack was highly pleased with this result; especially as he had come to the conclusion that his holiday now had lasted long enough, and that he would set about finding work in earnest.

V

In the matter of finding work when he wanted it, Jack believed that all before him was plain sailing.

He had brought a letter of introduction from the senior partner of the car-building firm to a banker in Wall Street, and he felt very sure that he had only to step down and present this letter in order to secure at once precisely the berth that he desired. It was possible even, he thought, that the banker might offer him a junior partnership: he had heard that the life of New York business houses was due to the clear-sighted way in which their managers constantly were recruiting from the country young men in whom were manifest the elements of commercial success.

Holding these views, young Mr. Rayford was both surprised and pained by the manner in which his letter to the Wall Street banker was received. He did not even lay eyes on the banker; and at the end of half an hour after his card and letter had been sent in, word came out to him from that gentleman that he was very much occupied, but would be glad to see him at some other time.

As he walked up Wall Street, after this adventure, Jack felt a little dazed. On his way to present his letter, he had admired the statue of George Washington. Regarding the statue in his changed mood, he decided that its legs were unduly long, and that as a work of art it was greatly overrated. He was hurt at the scant courtesy that had been shown him. When New York men had come with letters of introduction to the car-building firm, they had been well taken care of. More than once, in order to be civil to casual New-Yorkers, who had no claim on him whatever, he had hired a buggy himself and taken

them driving. This uncivil return for his civility was rasping.

However, as he walked up Broadway, and the soothing influences of a bustling city calmed him a little, he reflected that he must make allowances for the difference between the easy ways of the country and the driving ways of the town. In the morning papers he had read that this very banker was engaged in a gigantic deal with a great English syndicate that was negotiating for the purchase of all the tanneries in the United States. As he read the announcement it had occurred to him that he himself probably would have a hand in this deal before it was ended; this did not seem so probable now, but the reflection that the banker no doubt was engaged in most important consultation with the English capitalists was a very reasonable excuse for his deferring their interview. No doubt, when they did meet, the banker would apologize for his unavoidable rudeness—and would make things all right by giving him a part in his next great transaction. It was a comforting reflection that several things, including the country itself, still remained in the United States for English syndicates to buy. By the time that Jack, walking up Broadway, got home to Prudence, he was in a cheery mood again—and they made an expedition to Fort Lee; and took a delightful walk along the Palisades; and broke through their rule about eating all their meals at their hotel by having a very jolly dinner at a queer little French restaurant, where the proprietor took a personal interest in them, and talked to them in a fatherly way in broken Eng-

lish; and then they took another walk on the Palisades, by moonlight; and never got back to their hotel in New York until it was nearly bedtime.

Jack's second attempt to see the banker also was a failure; but it was not barren of results, for he was given an appointment—in consideration of the strong letter that he brought—for the next morning. This was hopeful—which was more than could be said of the interview when it did finally come off. In the course of the five minutes that it lasted Jack was informed that New York was the most overcrowded city in the world; that the only place where there was any room in it was at the very top; and that if he, the banker, heard of any business opening that he thought suited to Mr. Rayford's requirements he would communicate with him. Jack walked up Wall Street, after these cheerless communications had been made, not only dazed but demoralized. He was beginning to have forced home upon him the truth that there was a very seamy side to New York. As he looked at the statue of George Washington he decided that its legs were not only too long, but that one of them actually was longer than the other. In short, he was in a most misanthropic frame of mind.

Fortunately, when he got home to Prudence he found that young person in an exceedingly gay mood. During his expeditions down-town she had been making explorations of New York on her own account, and had derived much amusement from them. In the course of that particular morning she had taken an especially entertaining cruise—down

Fifth Avenue in a stage as far as the stage would take her, she explained, and then all around in the queerest and most delightful part of the town that they yet had found. Jack had no more notion than Prudence had herself of the shady region that, unharmed, she had been wandering through; and partly because he wanted something that would take him out of himself and make him forget a little the troubles that he began to be conscious were impending, and partly because he really wanted to see the queer part of New York that Prudence had discovered, he very willingly accepted her suggestion that they should have their lunch at once, and then set off to explore together the city within a city that she had found.

Though Jack did not know it, his hand held up to stop a Fifth Avenue stage might well have been the hand of Fate itself; for as they entered that incommodious vehicle and went lumbering southward, each turn of the heavy wheels marked an appreciable advance toward the fulfilment of their destiny. It is one of the pleasing features of this life that we all are living without even a single one of us understanding its meaning—and especially one of the things which strengthen the position of the theorists who advocate the freedom of the human mind to will—that upon such chances as an accidental determination to ride up-town or down-town in an omnibus the whole shaping of our lives depends.

Neither Jack nor Prudence took this serious view of the case as they jolted down Fifth Avenue, and

across Washington Square into South Fifth Avenue, and finally descended from the stage at Bleecker Street. Prudence was overjoyed to pilot Jack through the queer country that she had discovered; and Jack, whose spirits were of an elastic sort, found his dread of impending calamity rapidly slipping away from him as he and Prudence wandered delightedly through the shabby streets; and commented with interest upon the odd people whom they met; and drew each other's attention to the many extraordinary signs. Prudence was especially moved by finding herself in the very home of the curlers of feathers and makers of artificial flowers; and they both speculated curiously upon what the sign reading "manufacturer of peps for artificial flowers" possibly could mean. Neither of them ever had heard of a pep; and when, later, they looked for the word in the dictionary, they could not find it. But nearly everything that they saw in the course of that walk was curious and delightful. The majority of the people whom they met very evidently were not Americans, and most of the scraps of talk which they heard were Italian or French. No imagination at all was required, Prudence declared, to fancy that they were visiting a foreign country.

But the fateful part of this walk was that in the course of it they came upon the Casa Napoléon. It had a most attractive look, this little hotel. In the balcony that ran along the line of the second-floor windows flowers were growing in pots; and there was a most pleasing air of neatness and comfort about it; and out from the front door—for dinner-

time was near at hand—came a most appetizing smell.

"What great, what very great fun it would be to live there, Jack!" Prudence said. The tone in which she spoke showed that the possibility of making this suggestion a practical reality had not occurred to her.

But Jack pulled up short, and answered: "Well, why shouldn't we?" For it struck him suddenly that this must be a much cheaper hotel than the one at which they were stopping, and that here was a chance to see a very queer side of New York life, and at the same time to make a wise, not to say a necessary, reduction in their expenses.

"Oh, you dear boy! Do you really mean it? Let us go right in, this very instant, and find out about terms." And when they found that they could have the little room on the fourth floor for five dollars a week, and that their board would cost them only twelve dollars a week more—with the charm of being talked to in broken English, and of hearing all sorts of foreign languages talked all around them thrown in without any extra charge at all—it is not surprising that these light-hearted young people decided without a single moment of hesitation that here should be their home. With characteristic promptitude, and taking advantage of the fact that their week at the other hotel was just ended, they moved in that very day.

Cheered by the knowledge that at a single stroke he had reduced his weekly expenses more than one-half, and that on the basis of living thus established he had money enough to carry him for a full three

months, Jack's spirits came up with a bound. The spice of adventure that was involved in dwelling in such unconventional quarters tickled his fancy; and the knowledge that at last he really was out in the world and was fighting his way on his merits enlarged his sense of self-esteem. With these pleasant forces at work within him, and with Prudence quite literally dancing with delight because of their migration to the foreign country that she herself had found, it was in a very happy frame of mind that Mr. and Mrs. Rayford entered into possession of their contracted kingdom on the fourth floor of the Casa Napoléon.

VI

When they went down to dinner that first night—being dwellers within the hotel, not mere patrons of the restaurant—they were conducted by Madame into the dining-room, that had painted over its doorway in large black letters the word "*Comedor.*" Later, they came to know that this word meant dining-room in the Spanish tongue; but they never quite lost the impression then conveyed that it had a hidden but close connection with some unknown Spanish naval officer who, no doubt, at one time had occupied it. And, on the other hand, even after Jack had attained a very tolerable working knowledge of Spanish, his habit of calling a dining-room a commodore remained unbroken.

They decided, on the whole, that this was the jolliest dinner that they had eaten since they came

to New York. The dining-room had one long table down the middle of it, and four little round tables in its four corners. As a mark of distinction, Madame placed them at one of the little round tables; and from this point of advantage they could look about them upon their house-mates, and could see a good deal, also, through an archway that on occasion could be closed by a folding-door, of their board-mates in the adjoining restaurant. At the little round table opposite to them sat Mrs. Myrtle Vane, a blonde beauty of the large type, whom age had so far succeeded in withering that she had been compelled to summon in defense of her vanishing complexion the kindly aid of art. She wore a voluminous and highly colored tea-gown—that Prudence perceived stood urgently in need of washing—and diamond rings of all shapes and sizes blazed upon her large thick hands. But she seemed to be a good-natured body, and when the young people took their seats she nodded to them pleasantly. In fact, everybody in the room bowed to them; a proceeding that surprised them a good deal, until, casting about in their minds for the cause of this friendliness, they remembered that such was the affable custom at the ordinaries of foreign hotels. The only other lady in the room was Mrs. Mortimer—who also was a blonde, but of a highly factitious kind. Even Jack could see that her complexion was manufactured, but the keener observation of Prudence was required to perceive that her hair was bleached and that her eyebrows were dyed. In truth, Mrs. Mortimer, to use the terms of commerce, was put up to meet the

requirements of the Spanish-American market; and long study of this market had made her very successful in supplying its demands. As to her dress, the Queen of Sheba never came to a *table d'hôte* in a finer one. Colonel Withersby sat opposite to her—a big, good-looking man, with an air of such entire assurance that he seemed quite capable, had he happened to fall in with that august personage, of clapping the Pope on the back and offering him a chance to come in on the ground floor in the floating of a tramway enterprise. He and Mrs. Mortimer conversed with much animation, indifferently in Spanish and English, and—later, when Madame joined them—in French. Jack and Prudence gathered from what was said in English that the colonel had just returned from a successful business trip to Bogotá. There were half a dozen dark-skinned Cubans at the table, who chattered with each other volubly, and who occasionally took part in Colonel Withersby's and Mrs. Mortimer's talk; and at the little round table in the far corner of the room a coal-black gentleman from Hayti, very richly dressed, and exhibiting all the jewelry that one man possibly could display, ate his dinner solitary. All the Cubans had recourse at short intervals to the consolation of cigarettes, which they rolled deftly between their yellow fingers; and when the colonel had arrived at the stage of coffee and toothpicks, he lighted a huge cigar. For Jack and Prudence it was all better than anything that they had seen at the theaters; and its exceeding farawayness was made the more real by the fact that the Cuban negro, Telésforo, who

waited upon them, could speak not more than half a dozen words of English, and insisted upon addressing them in Spanish throughout their repast. When they had retired to their very small room on the fourth floor—the company in the dining-room, according to their several nationalities, saying good night and *buenas noches* and *bon soir* as they retired —Prudence threw her arms about Jack's neck and declared that nothing so delightful as that queer dinner had happened to her since she was born.

"Not even getting married?" Jack asked.

"Certainly not," Prudence answered; and then, a little shocked at the wicked falseness of this assertion, she added: "Of course I don't include that. That stands all by itself, and don't count in ordinary matters any more than air or sunshine or—or—"

"Kisses," Jack interpolated.

"I am ashamed of you, Jack," Prudence was presently able to say; but her tone was not overburdened with severity. "And I've come to the conclusion, Jack," she went on—when they had overcome in the only practical manner the inconvenience of having only one chair—"that what we must call ourselves now is a disguised count and countess. We can be driven from our estates, you know, and forced to fly to America, leaving all of our wealth behind us; and that makes it perfectly natural that we should come to this hotel and live in a little room on the fourth floor. And then, when you begin to make money, or, what will be still more life-like, when you find your half-uncle William and he form-

ally adopts you, we can consider that we have had our rightful inheritance restored to us."

"And we will go back to our ancestral castle under a triumphal arch, while a brass-band plays, and all the tenants come to welcome us in clean smock-frocks and white dresses with pink bows?"

"Exactly," Prudence answered. "But really, Jack," she went on, presently, "why don't you write to your half-uncle William, and ask him, not exactly to adopt you, you know, but to put you in the way of making a fortune for yourself? Since he has made a fortune of his own, he certainly will be able to show you how he did it; that wouldn't be asking much of a favor of him, I'm sure."

"Supposing that he has made a fortune, which, you must remember, Prudence, is an entirely gratuitous supposition, it would not. But how would you address the letter; just to 'William Strahan, South America'?"

"Why, of course," Prudence answered. "That's where he is, isn't it?"

"Yes; at least he's more likely to be in South America than anywhere else—that is, if he's alive, you know. But South America is a biggish place, Prue."

"But you might try," Prudence persisted; "it couldn't do any harm, and he *might* get it, you know—and then think how comfortable everything would be. He would take us right home to live with him, of course; and I always have so longed to live in a tropical country. You don't know, Jack, how I suffer in winter from cold feet at night!" And then,

as it struck Prudence that Jack but very recently had acquired a position that entitled him to confidences of this nature, she blushed delightfully, and went on with some confusion: "Just think of the oranges, and the pineapple palms, and the delicious sunshine, and the deep blue sky."

"Pineapple palms is good," Jack replied, unfeelingly. "What you seem to stand in need of, Prudence, is a post-graduate course in geography and pomology; in both of those branches of learning you are decidedly weak. I don't think that I need write my letter to Half-uncle William to-night; so suppose you put on your hat, and we'll take a turn in that square where that twisted statue of Garibaldi is, while I smoke a pipe. Under the trees out there, with foreign languages going off all around us, it will be like a bit out of an opera."

VII

Jack was punctual in informing the Wall Street banker of the change in his address, and for a week he entertained a lively hope that each morning would bring him a letter from that gentleman containing an offer of a three-thousand-dollar clerkship. By this time his earlier hope of a junior partnership was abandoned. But the letter did not come. Then he sent a polite note of reminder; and as, at the end of three days, no answer came to this missive, he decided that he had better call in person. He waited an hour, and then accomplished an interview of two

minutes. This time it was a quite decisive interview. The banker declared positively that he could not put Mr. Rayford in the way of obtaining any employment in New York; that the beginning of summer was no time to look for work in New York, anyway; and that he must beg Mr. Rayford not again to intrude upon his valuable time. He relented a little as he saw how white and drawn Jack's face looked, and said that if anything did turn up he certainly would communicate with Mr. Rayford at once. And then, with a show of regretful cordiality that was not entirely assumed, he shook hands with Mr. Rayford, and politely showed him to the door. It really did annoy him to turn the young fellow adrift—but what else could he do?

For the first time since they had arrived in New York, the dinner that Jack and Prudence ate that night was a melancholy one. When Jack came home and told her what a knock-down he had had, Prudence had done her best to comfort him. In truth, to her the blow did not seem nearly so serious a matter as it seemed to him; for by heredity and training they looked at the economic affairs of life from widely different points of view. Jack had been brought up to regard running in debt as a crime only a trifle less deadly than those expressly forbidden by the Ten Commandments; and he had been accustomed all his life to rigorous effort to keep his outlay within the limits of a small but certain income. Prudence, whose conscious years had been passed in the household of her many times bankrupt stepfather, regarded running in debt as one of life's necessary

evils; and her only notion of regulating her outlay was to spend what money she was lucky enough to have until it was all gone. When this point was reached, her simple financial creed told her that unless what she wanted was to be found in the stock of her stepfather's store, she must go without it. And out of the up-and-down life that her stepfather had led her — of comfort when, with fresh credit, he had taken a fresh start; of downright privation when, as bankruptcy drew near again, ready money was all gone and the stock in the store was nearly exhausted—she had acquired a philosophic indifference to poverty, and a most unphilosophic faith in the certainty that something was bound to turn up just as the situation was becoming desperate.

But on this dismal night, when she tried to comfort Jack by proving out of the shifts of her past very shifty life how certain it was that bad luck couldn't last, Jack refused to recognize the soundness of her reasoning and declined to be comforted. From the standpoint of his training and experience, the man who accepted without serious alarm a situation that involved a steady outlay, to meet which there was not even a prospect of an income, was moving with a dangerous rapidity in the direction of positive crime. The enunciation of this novel doctrine interested Prudence: it struck her as both curious and original.

On the whole, it was a good thing for Jack that Prudence did not share his economical views. Having been all her life accustomed to believe that there was no need to worry so long as there was any ready

money in the house at all, she was not seriously cast down as the summer days slipped away and Jack's manifold efforts to get a standing-room in New York slipped away with them. She was stayed by an absolutely unquenchable belief that his genius was of the towering kind that in the end must command success. Holding to this conviction, she was not in the least dismayed by his repeated checks in his effort to live out his handsome destiny. And this confidence in him, and the constant cheerfulness that Prudence logically maintained because of it, did give substantial comfort to Jack as the days went on until they became months and he still remained stranded in enforced idleness. While such love for him and faith in him continued, he thought, he had no right to despair. Therefore he answered advertisements at the average rate of three a day; and did his best to stand pluckily up to the steady fire of failure, and to emulate with a pretended cheerfulness her cheerfulness that was entirely genuine. His pretense did not for a moment deceive her; but she, pretending that she was deceived, deceived him very satisfactorily.

In the early days of his apprenticeship to answering advertisements—the dead season of summer having not quite set in—he had been offered two or three berths that later he would have accepted very gladly. The best of these was that of entry clerk in a wholesale dry-goods house at nine hundred dollars a year. He had declined that position promptly. It was absurd, he thought, to work in New York for three hundred dollars a year less than he had

been paid in the country; and especially absurd to accept a place that would give him only twenty-six dollars a year more than his actual board and lodging. He and Prudence laughed a good deal over the way that they would dress and pay all their incidental expenses out of that margin. He remembered these jokes rather bitterly, one day late in September, when he found himself seriously considering the advisability of accepting—of course only until he should be able to get something better—the position of invoice clerk, with a firm of exporters just starting in business, at a salary of ten dollars a week—to which was added the problematical inducement of a chance to grow up with the house. He told the two exporters—they were pleasant young fellows, not much older than himself—that he would give them an answer the next day; and they urged him to make it an answer in the affirmative, for they liked his looks, and his references—to the car-building firm in the country—were as good as references could be. The thought had entered his mind more than once to try to get back to that pleasant resting-place in life that he had abandoned so lightly; but for very shame—after all the tall talk that he had indulged in before starting out on his own account into the world—he would not bring himself as yet to make the admission that his effort to better himself had been a lamentable failure.

When he came home and told Prudence of the offer that he had received, her counsels, for once, were in keeping with her name. The practice of her shifty stepfather had been always to take what he

could get. "Little things," said this expert in bankruptcy, "were not to be sneezed at when you couldn't get big ones." Prudence had a great respect for the business capacity of her stepfather, and in the light of his words of wisdom she advised Jack to accept the very small thing that now was offered to him, and to make the most of it until he got something better—as he certainly would, she added with entire honesty, in a very little while. Ten dollars a week would pay more than half their expenses, she pointed out; and that would make what was left of their ready money—there still remained to them rather more than a hundred dollars—go more than twice as far: which piece of arithmetic was absolutely incontrovertible. In short, Prudence manifested an amount of worldly wisdom that really was quite astonishing; and that, in the end, Jack admitted was wholly convincing. And the upshot of her preaching was that he went down-town the next morning and accepted his ten-dollar-a-week clerkship, and straightway entered upon the discharge of his duties.

Jack found that getting to work, even in so poor a way, did him good. He was a capital bookkeeper, and he naturally enjoyed doing what he knew he could do thoroughly well. And when the young exporters discovered that he was living in the thick of Spanish Americans, and that he could talk Spanish fairly well—for Prudence had lived up to her high resolves in regard to that language and had made Jack live up with her—they became quite excited over the possibility of fresh captures through his

exertions of Spanish-American trade. They would make it an object to him to rustle, they declared; and they did make it an object by offering upon the fruits of his "rustling" a very liberal commission.

VIII

It is not to be supposed that two such friendly young people as Jack and Prudence could remain in so friendly a household as that of the Casa Napoléon for a whole summer long without coming into tolerably close relations with the rather variegated company dwelling there. About these young people there was a frankness and an innocence that Madame —in a confidence to Monsieur Duvent—declared were *très piquant;* and that certainly had the effect of attracting toward them the better sides of the not especially frank and by no means innocent company that abode in the little hotel.

There was something humorous—that is to say, for the true meaning of this word has been obscured by ill use of it, something on the border line between tears and laughter—in the way that the several shady characters frequenting the Casa Napoléon made their good will manifest. Monsieur Duvent, who came to the hotel so regularly because of the opportunities which he there found of meeting rich young Spanish Americans whom he might profitably introduce into the respectable gaming establishment of which he was a part, talked to Jack in a very fatherly way about the dangers of a great city, and

especially warned him to give gambling a wide berth. From the fund of his own ample experience, he drew such a picture of the evils of gaming that Jack was seriously shocked by it. It was the more to Monsieur Duvent's credit that he acted this fatherly rôle not long after Jack came to the Casa Napoléon, and while he was still in possession, as was known to his mentor, of several hundred dollars. That Colonel Withersby did not attempt to secure any of these dollars on a call-loan—and a tremendous amount of calling usually had to be gone through with before these loans, which the colonel had a fine knack at negotiating, could be made to come back again—was due in part, probably, to the fact that when he first met Jack he had just returned from striking it rich in Bogotá. But to the credit of the colonel be it said that, later in the summer, when his Bogotá dollars were all gone, and while some of Jack's American dollars still remained, he deliberately abstained from rectifying his frontiers at the expense of Jack's very defenseless territory. He'd be blanked, said the colonel, in his bluff military way, in the course of a frank talk with Mrs. Mortimer, in which his impecuniosity had been touched upon and this method of relieving it had been suggested, if he'd got as low down yet as to make a strike that way. And Mrs. Mortimer applauded his good resolutions.

Not less well disposed toward Jack and Prudence were the ladies of the establishment. Polly Harrison (professionally known as Violet Bream), who was as kind-hearted a natural-born soubrette as ever mistakenly attempted high tragedy, quite fell in

love with Prudence—and was so entirely sincere about it that she was not in the least jealous when Mr. Claude Dunbar, that is to say, Ned, her husband, frankly admitted that he was in love with Prudence himself. And these good souls took Jack to their hearts also—for it made them think, as Polly explained to Prudence, of the very happy time when they were ten years younger, and were newly married themselves. "You see how handsome my dear boy is now," Polly said, proudly; "but I wish that you could have seen him then! And if your husband is as good and as kind to you as mine has been to me," she went on, and there was a little tremble in her voice that made the heart of Prudence thrill sympathetically, "you need not fear any troubles that may come to you." Miss Bream and Mr. Dunbar were playing a summer engagement at one of the minor theatres, and they were kindness itself in giving Jack and Prudence box-office orders. It grew a little monotonous, to be sure, after they had seen the same farcical performance ten or fifteen times; but it was better to see it over and over again, Prudence said, than not see anything; and she added, a trifle ambiguously, that it was not right to look a gift theatre ticket in the mouth.

Mrs. Myrtle Vane betook herself, about the 1st of July, to Saratoga—whence she wrote to her New York and Western papers letters which were badly constructed, and which contained a good many grammatical eccentricities, but which were as full of "spice" as letters possibly could be. And as neither the editors nor the readers of the journals which she

had on her string, as she expressed it, had even a rudimentary knowledge of literary style, and were accustomed to grammatical forms fit to send a thrill of agony through the dry bones of the late Mr. Lindley Murray, her letters, as usual, were a great success. Before she left town, Mrs. Vane made very friendly advances toward Prudence; and when she returned to town early in September, she greeted her young friend with effusion. Prudence was quite overawed by coming into such cordial relations with a literary person; and she felt that there must be something all wrong with her own literary tastes, because the reading of Mrs. Vane's newspaper letters always made her feel as though she must at once give herself a thorough washing.

Mrs. Mortimer stayed in town all summer. The summer was her season of harvest, for then it was that the rich Cubans—fleeing from the heat of their island home—came northward. Mrs. Mortimer manifested a great friendliness for Prudence at first; but later she rather drew away from her. Possibly, perceiving the sweet innocence which was in the nature of Prudence, and which shone out in all her acts and words, this drawing away was a sign of a still better friendliness. It is certain that this lady, whose most striking characteristic was not shyness, was truly shy in her dealings with this young girl. Sometimes Prudence, looking up suddenly, would find Mrs. Mortimer's eyes fixed upon her with an expression of sadness and longing that was almost tragical, and that Prudence could not even remotely understand. It occurred to her that perhaps Mrs.



SOMETIMES PRUDENCE WOULD FIND MRS. MORTIMER'S EYES FIXED UPON HER

Mortimer had had a daughter once who, had she lived, would be about the age that she, Prudence, was now; and it is not impossible that Mrs. Mortimer at these times really was thinking of some such innocent young life that long ago had come to an untimely end. As the summer advanced, bringing the rich Cubans with it, Mrs. Mortimer maintained over Prudence a dragon-like guard; breaking up all attempts on the part of these foreign gentlemen to open conversations with her—which she was disposed to encourage, for the sake of practising her newly acquired Spanish—and in all ways very vigorously standing them off. Colonel Withersby and Monsieur Duvent frequently chuckled over these demonstrations. "She's a keen one," said the colonel. "Protection to home industries is her rule; and you can bet your life that she's not going to stand any nonsense like free trade." And Monsieur Duvent, stroking his gray imperial, answered: "*Oui, monsieur;* she 'as the level 'ead, this madame." Yet for once these keen judges of human nature, failing to take into consideration a range of thoughts quite beyond their comprehension, arrived at conclusions which were not absolutely correct.

But the most surprising proof of friendliness manifested toward Jack and Prudence was found in the fact that Don Anastasio—who made out the bills, under Madame's supervision—refrained from adding to Jack's account any of the ingenious overcharges that he was in the habit of adding to accounts in general, and in the concoction of which long experience had given him great skill. Possibly,

at first, Madame may have checked him in this matter; but as time went on no supervision of this sort was required to keep him honest in his renderings. Indeed, when Prudence fell ill, very many of the perfectly legitimate extras which ought to have gone into Jack's bills stayed out of them—and with Madame's entire consent and hearty approval. They were very far from being saints, Madame and Don Anastasio, but beneath the hard coating of guile with which time and, more especially, many years of inn-keeping had overlaid and chilled their hearts, there still remained a soft spot in which was warmth; and this warmth went out freely to "the children" —as they presently fell into the way of calling the very guileless young couple whom fate had driven within their doors. When Jack at last settled to work with the firm of young exporters, Madame made a little feast for them; and as the very crown and glory of this feast brought up with her own hands from the cellar a bottle of her rare old burgundy—which neither Jack nor Prudence in the least appreciated, and which, to save it from the desecration of being mixed with water, she and Don Anastasio were compelled to drink hurriedly themselves.

Especially was Don Anastasio delighted with the efforts which Jack and Prudence made, and which by the end of summer had achieved a reasonable degree of success, to acquire the Spanish tongue. That they seriously wished to speak his own beautiful language was a form of flattery, as delicate as it was unintentional, that went straight to his heart. It was his strong desire, he told them, that they

should know and love his very dear friend the Señor Estrano, who was due to arrive at any time now, and he much preferred that Spanish should be the speech in which this friendship should begin. The Señor Estrano, it was true, did speak English—indeed, he was an Englishman, Don Anastasio thought—but long use of Spanish had made it his most familiar language; and then, if they would pardon him for saying so, Spanish was the only language in which could be adequately expressed the feelings of the heart.

Of his dear friend, Don Anastasio never tired of talking. There was not a virtue under heaven that he did not attribute to him: in war he was a very Paladin; he was as generous as he was brave; he was tenderness and goodness personified; he was *muy simpâtico, muy fino*—which words, Don Anastasio explained, meant vastly more than their literal English equivalent of very sympathetic and very fine. And when the Señor Estrano actually arrived, it was as though a whirlwind had struck the Casa Napoléon—so tumultuous was the outburst of Don Anastasio's joy. Such huggings, and hearty pattings of each other's backs—punctuated by pauses in which they affectionately held each other off at arms'-length that they might also feast their eyes—as these two warm-hearted old boys indulged in made a spectacle the like of which Jack and Prudence had never beheld. It gave them a wonderful notion of Spanish-American warm-heartedness, and also added to the very cordial feeling on their part toward the Señor Estrano that had been created in advance of

his coming by Don Anastasio's laudations of his many excellences.

As they came to know him better, this feeling toward Don Anastasio's friend steadily grew warmer and stronger. He was a simple-minded, sweet-hearted man, very gentle in his ways; and in his thoughts and actions there seemed to be at all times a tender and considerate kindliness. Toward Prudence he presently manifested an affection so fatherly that even Mrs. Mortimer was not suspicious of it; and Jack and he—Prudence declared that they were wonderfully alike—were warm friends in no time. When he found that Jack was having a hard time of it, and that he could help him by making his purchases of supplies from the firm of young exporters, he jumped at the chance thus offered—only regretting that his heaviest orders must be placed with firms with which he had standing contracts. Jack was sorry too; but he was most devoutly thankful for the hundred dollars or so that came to him thus in the way of commissions—for at this juncture he had arrived at the point when his reserve of ready money was all gone, and the problem confronted him of meeting a fixed outlay with just half its amount of fixed income.

IX

But a much more serious trouble came to Jack about this time: Prudence fell ill. For a good while past, as he perceived in looking backward, she had not seemed quite herself. Slowly, so slowly that he

scarcely had noticed it, she had fallen into a low way. She lost her appetite, and her spirits flagged. Madame perceived this change more clearly than Jack did; for Jack was away all day, and Prudence did her best to be as cheerful as possible when he came home at night. It was Madame who advised Jack that Doctor Théophile should be consulted. He was a very good doctor, she said; and he was good also, she added, in that he charged but little and never was pressing with his bills. And when the doctor came—and looked very grave over the case that he was called to deal with—Prudence thankfully gave up trying to seem well for Jack's sake, and took to her bed and stayed there. There was a dull languor pressing upon her. She spoke little and slept a great deal. Doctor Théophile confided to Madame that he would feel much more comfortable if his patient would develop a raging fever—or any other decisive symptom that he could decisively lay hold upon.

Quite a commotion went through the Casa Napoléon when it was known that the little body, whose hold was so firm upon so many hearts, lay ill. Polly Harrison, who heard about it just as she was starting out to buy a new bonnet—and a new bonnet was a good deal of an event in Polly's life—went instantly to Perceval's and bought a mould of beef jelly that she carried to Prudence with her own hands, and with her own arms hugged her, while she besought her to get well at once. Polly put aside the remainder of her bonnet money, to be used in the interest of the invalid as occasion might re-

quire. Mrs. Myrtle Vane, being short of cash at the moment, sat down quickly at a writing-table and wrote such a spicy article about a divorce suit then pending in the courts that the editor of a prominent newspaper gladly gave her fifteen dollars for it for use in his next Sunday edition—and the very first thing bought with that fifteen dollars (the whole of it being sacredly set apart as a relief fund) was a bottle of Madame's rare old burgundy, which Mrs. Myrtle Vane herself carried to Prudence and presented with every mark of sincere affection. Colonel Withersby, who was just returned from a flying trip to Valparaiso, where he had made a turn in tramways that had filled his pockets most refreshingly, was all unused to expressing sympathy such as the present case demanded, and was rather put to his trumps—until the happy thought occurred to him, evolved out of his memory of the joy that his mother had derived from a like present, to send Prudence a large illustrated family Bible. Being by the grace of heaven a member of the polite nation, Monsieur Duvent knew precisely what to do, and did it promptly. On his way to his respectable gaming establishment he purchased a huge bouquet and a five-pound box of bonbons—which offering he at once sent to Prudence, by one of the employés of the gambling-rooms, with his card.

Mrs. Mortimer alone failed to take part in this general manifestation of sympathy. But she waited for Jack on the stairs, and said to him, in a voice that trembled and broke a little: "I haven't sent anything to your wife, Mr. Rayford, because I

thought that—that—with my money, you know, I had better not. But if I can do anything myself," she went on, eagerly, "if I can help nurse her—that is, if you'll let me come near her—or do anything at all, oh, you don't know what a comfort doing it will be to me! I might do errands, perhaps; and if you would rather not have me come into the room, I can sit in the passage and be ready to get somebody when she calls. I may do that, mayn't I, Mr. Rayford? And you don't mind my loving her, do you? Please let me love her—she won't know about it, and it can't do her any harm." And as Mrs. Mortimer turned away, Jack perceived—he could not make head nor tail of her extraordinary outburst—that her far from genuine complexion had been temporarily ruined by entirely genuine tears. He thanked her very warmly; and when he came in again he found her sitting in the passage just outside the door of the little room in which Prudence lay. She would not enter the room; and during a good part of the ensuing three weeks she maintained her watch in the passageway. The Cuban season was not ended, either.

The three weeks that followed were the blackest that Jack had ever known. Prudence did not get actively worse, but each day she was a little weaker than she had been the day before.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" Doctor Théophile exclaimed. "If she vould but 'ave a *fièvre brulante*—if she vould but 'ave *any* sort of a being sick that I could take 'old of vith my two 'ands! I cannot make the good

battle, M'sieu', for 'ere is nothing vith vich it is for me to stand up and fight!"

Jack explained matters to the firm of young exporters, and they were as good-hearted about it as they could be. They told him to stay at home until his wife was better, and they sent his salary of ten dollars up to him every Saturday night—which was a good deal for a young and by no means flourishing firm of exporters to do. Jack scarcely left the little room all day long. Only, acting under Doctor Théophile's imperative orders, he went out every afternoon and walked for half an hour in Washington Square. It would not do for him to fall ill too, the doctor said; and Jack perceived that this statement was strictly true.

During these short absences Madame would sit by Prudence and watch her; or Polly Harrison, or Mrs. Myrtle Vane. Jack had asked Mrs. Mortimer to take this place, but she had declined. It was better, she said, that she should stay outside. And every day the Señor Estrano would come and sit, sometimes for an hour at a time, beside the bed on which Prudence lay, looking at her the while with loving, longing eyes—as though by the sheer strength of loving her he would make her tighten again her slowly loosing grasp on life. And Don Anastasio also would pay Prudence short visits—and would go away again, with eyes unduly red for reading, to seek comfort in the *Siete Partidas* of Alonzo the Wise. But it was cold comfort that Don Anastasio found in the wisdom of the King of Castile. Great though his wisdom assuredly was, it did not suffice

to put brightness into the shadows which fall as a young life fades out from time into eternity.

It was late in the third week that the doctor, coming to make his morning visit, saw a gleam of hope in the fact that his patient unquestionably was feverish. But with his hope came also great anxiety. As he went away he confided to Madame that, one way or the other, the case would be settled within twenty-four hours. If Prudence had enough strength left in her to pull her through this crisis, all would be well; if she had not—and the doctor nodded in a way that made Madame understand.

For Jack that was the worst day of all. Prudence was not exactly delirious, but she grew more and more excited as the fever increased; and she talked —and this was so hard for Jack to bear—in much the lively way that was natural with her when she was quite well. She seemed to forget all their troubles, and rattled on about their expeditions around New York, and their theatre-goings, and the good time that they were having generally. In the afternoon her thoughts took another turn. She remembered that they were getting steadily poorer, and that now, because of her illness, their outlay would be increased. She fretted over it all, and devised feverish plans for extricating themselves from the tangle in which they were involved. Then the thought of Jack's long-lost and highly mythical half-uncle drifted into her mind, and with it her desire that Jack should write to him. "Have you written to him yet, Jack?" she asked; and Jack, with whom tact was not a strong point at the best

of times, and who now was very little short of heart-broken, said bluntly that he had not.

"Oh, Jack, it is cruel of you not to write that letter when I want you to so much. I'd do it for you, Jack, if you asked me to. Do be a dear boy and sit down and write it now."

Just then Doctor Théophile came for his afternoon visit. Prudence turned to him and said:

"Doctor, won't you please make Jack write the letter. It worries me so much that he won't do it. Writing it can do no harm, you know; and it may do us so much good. Please make him do it, doctor." On her face there was a look of great trouble and anxiety.

"*Vous avez raison,* Madame," said Doctor Théophile briskly. "It is mos' necessaire that 'e write this letter *à l'instant*—vat you call at vunce." And then he added to Jack, speaking in a whisper: "I do not know, M'sieu', of vat it is that Madame speak. But if it is vat cannot be done, you mus' make to appear that you do it. Her life is the price. You understand? Now is *la crise.* She turns now to live or die. *Allez,* M'sieu'—'urry to write!"

"Of course I'll write the letter, dear," Jack said. "I'll do it this very minute. You shall see me do it; and then you'll know that it's really done."

"Oh, thank you, Jack," Prudence answered, and the troubled expression left her face. "Write it, and then read it to me; and then, do you know, I think I'll go to sleep." There was a look of satisfaction in Doctor Théophile's face as Prudence spoke of going to sleep; and his satisfaction increased as

he touched her hand and found that it was slightly moist.

Jack went to the bureau on which the little portfolio that belonged to Prudence lay, and braced himself to the writing of the letter. There came into his mind their light talk about it, that June day when they first took possession so gaily of the quarters where such bitter sorrow had come to them. He knew what Prudence wanted him to write, and with the very blackness of death around him he wrote.

"Now read it to me," Prudence said; "and be quick, Jack, for I am *so* sleepy!" And Jack read:

CASA NAPOLÉON, *October 17th.*

To William Strahan, Esq., South America:

DEAR HALF-UNCLE WILLIAM,—I am the son of your half-sister Mary, who married John Rayford, my father. Just at present I stand urgently in need of your assistance. My wife is sick, and I have very little money. Please let me have at once a check for $1000; and please make arrangements promptly for adopting us as your son and daughter, and for taking us home to live with you. An early answer will oblige your affectionate half-nephew JOHN RAYFORD.

"Thank you, Jack," Prudence said, drowsily. "That is a very nice letter, and I am sure that it will make everything right. Just kiss me, please; and then I'll take a nap." Jack laid the letter on the bureau and bent to kiss her—her forehead was cool and moist—but she already was asleep.

Doctor Théophile placed a friendly hand on Jack's shoulder and so led him out into the passage. Shut-

ting the door behind them softly, he drew a long breath and exclaimed: "*Nous avons échappé belle* —vat you call 'ad the close shave, M'sieu'! It vas the writing of the letter by vich Madame was calméd that has saved her to be alive. At the good hour vas my coming to make you write." And then he went on jubilantly: "Now all is good. She vill sleep like a shoe for an hour; perhaps she vill sleep for two hours. Ven she vakes she vill be as veak as vater—but she vill 'ave start to make herself vell. You vill not be a vidow, my dear boy; she is save, this dear vife; she vill live to make you 'appy in many a glad year. And now vat is good for you, M'sieu', is to take a valk in the fresh air. I vill call the Madame from below; and ven she comes, do you go. It is vat you mos' need."

All that Jack could say was, "God bless you, doctor!" and when Madame came smiling up the stairs, and actually put her arms around him and kissed him, he pretty well broke down. Then he went out for his walk. His entire fortune at that moment consisted of ninety-four cents—and he was the very happiest man in New York!

X

When Jack came back, after an hour of vigorous walking, Prudence had just roused up, and was taking the beef-tea that Madame had ready for her. "It is really, absurd, Jack," she said, "I don't feel strong enough to lift my little finger, and yet I feel better and more like myself than I have felt for weeks.

But, oh, I am sleepy!" And she drowsed off once more into sleep.

All had gone well, Madame whispered. Prudence had slept so soundly that she had not even stirred when Don Guillermo had come in before Madame could stop him. He had kept the watch in her place for a while, she said, and had reported that during the hour or more of his watching Prudence had not so much as stirred a hand. Having delivered this cheering communication, Madame put her finger on her lips and left the room. She bore the good news down-stairs triumphantly—it was just dinner-time—and Colonel Withersby, still flush with the winnings of his Valparaiso tramways, at once set up champagne for everybody, in order that the general happiness might be fittingly celebrated.

Jack softly took off his shoes and put on his slippers, preparatory to settling down to his watch by the bedside. He stood by the bureau, on which the gaslight, shaded from the bed, shone brightly. He looked for the absurd letter that he had written; for the doctor had said that the writing of that letter had saved his wife's life, and thereafter it would be as long as he lived the most precious of his possessions. But he was surprised to find that the sheet that he had written was gone; and still more surprised to find in its place a sealed letter directed to him in a strange hand. And when he broke the seal he read:

CASA NAPOLÉON, *October 17th.*

MY DEAR HALF-NEPHEW,—You will be more than this to me now, for you shall be truly my son, and your dear wife, whom

I have learned to love so well, shall be my daughter. I do not know how this strange happiness has come to pass; but there will be plenty of time to tell it all when we get home to Venezuela. I am glad that you know Spanish; but had you known it better you might have guessed how easily our Spanish friends would turn into Estrano my name. A warm *abrazo* awaits you when you have read this—in the arms of your half-uncle, who is also now your father. WILLIAM STRAHAN.

P. S.—The check that you ask for is inclosed. There is much more ready for you in the bank.

And so black Care, and blacker Sorrow, in the selfsame day were driven out from the lives of Jack and Prudence; and in their place came Love, and with her Joy.

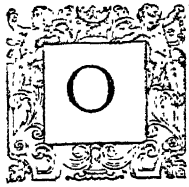
Of the tumult that reigned for a time in the Casa Napoléon when this wonderful glad news was known, words cannot tell. Colonel Withersby declared with his customary cheerful vigor that it was the blankedest best thing he'd ever heard of, and that he'd be blanked if he didn't mean to celebrate it by getting drunk and staying drunk for a week! And it is only just to the colonel to add—in view of the fact that his word was of the same value as his bond—that on this happy occasion his imprecated avowal of intentions was very literally and exactly fulfilled. Monsieur Duvent was so upset by the joyful shock that that evening, for the first and only time in his life, he made a misdeal. Miss Violet Bream and Mr. Claude Dunbar, otherwise known as Polly and Ned Harrison, voted that they were entitled on the strength of the good luck that had come to these friends of theirs to a spree of their own; and, having

a night off from the stage, made their spree take the characteristic form of going as a part of the audience to another theatre, and having a jolly little supper all to themselves afterward. Mrs. Myrtle Vane exhibited her gladness in the form of self-sacrifice; for she did *not* write it all up for the Sunday papers. Mrs. Mortimer was not heard from—in the midst of the excitement she quietly left the hotel.

As for Madame, she was as radiant as though this great good fortune had come to a daughter of her own. And Don Anastasio, quoting from the twentieth law of the Fourth Partida of the wise Alonzo of Castile, declared that he who cares with the love of a father for a child that is not his own wins to himself thereby that child's love and duty; and he added that of such strong friendship, as thus assuredly would be formed, King Alonzo had written in the seventh law of that same Fourth Partida: "Neither for sickness, nor for poverty, nor for any other ill shall true friendship be broken; but, rather, by the stress and trial thus laid upon it shall true friendship be made yet more strong, and shall friend yet the more closely cleave unto friend."

THE EFFERATI FAMILY

I



N the afternoon of Monday, April 30, 1888, simultaneously with the arrival at that hostelry of the Efferati Family, a storm of limited area but great violence was developed and was central over the Casa Napoléon.

This storm may be said to have come in a two-horse carriage. Its negative pole was the driver of the carriage, Mr. Michael O'Hallahan. Its positive pole was made up of Signor Giuseppe Garibaldi Efferati, Signora Vittoria Emmanuela Efferati, the Signorini Vittorio Emmanuele and Umberto Efferati, and Signorina Margherita Efferati—in conjunction with two trunks, three portmanteaux, five hand-bags, and the cases inclosing four mandolins and a double-strung guitar. It is something of a mystery how this load ever was piled into and upon a single carriage; but it was—and it made a pretty good-sized heap upon the pavement in front of the Casa Napoléon when it was there discharged.

It was when the process of unloading was completed and Signor Efferati tendered to Mr. O'Hal-



SIGNOR EFFERATI TENDERED TO MR. O'HALLAHAN TWO DOLLARS

lahan the sum of two dollars—which sum had been agreed upon by the high contracting parties as the fare that should be paid for bringing the Efferati Family and its belongings from the Desbrosses Street ferry to the hotel—that the positive and negative poles of this latent tempest came together with a bang!

Mr. O'Hallahan did not extend his hand to accept the money that Signor Efferati offered to him. On the contrary, he stepped back two paces, drew his head up proudly, closed his lips with great firmness about the stump of an extinguished cigar that was between them, and regarded the two-dollar bill with a cold and haughty stare.

"He is your money," said Signor Efferati.

"Oi'll be dommed if it's me money," answered Mr. O'Hallahan. "It's foive dollars oi'm afther chargin' yez—an' not a hair's-bridth of a dommed cint less!"

Upon the usually genial face of Signor Efferati a flush appeared, and his short and round and usually genial person began to quiver with a righteous rage. This barefaced swindle was more than he could stand.

"Robber!" he hissed, "take your money—or go without any money at all." But as he spoke these words in his native Italian, Mr. O'Hallahan could only infer that they were in the nature of a demand that the terms of the treaty should be fulfilled; which inference was confirmed by the fact that Signor Efferati shook the two-dollar bill violently beneath Mr. O'Hallahan's nose.

"You did say!" struck in Signora Efferati; who perceived the lingual complication that had arisen; and who also felt that it was time for her, in her capacity of family treasurer, to resist this assault upon the family purse.

"*Si*, you did say!" cried Signor Efferati, clutching eagerly at the English phrase, and hurling it at Mr. O'Hallahan in a tone of tragical command.

"Oi 'did say,' did oi? An' phwat did oi say, y' blatherin' Eytallian idjit? Oi said oi'd drive yez frum the ferry, an' mebbe a choild an' a box or two, fur two dollars. But did oi say oi'd drive th' whole dommed Eytallian nation an' all their dommed monkeys an' all their dommed hand-organs frum th' ferry for two dollars? Answer me that, y' dommed fat Eytallian baste, an' pay me the foive dollars y' owe me, before I knock th' stuffin' outen yer fat body an' yer dom two big oiyes inter one!" And, being thus delivered, Mr. O'Hallahan with great rapidity divested himself of his hat and coat and tossed these portions of his apparel upon the box of his carriage, placed carefully beside them the remnant of his cigar, and in this warlike disarray advanced toward Signor Efferati with his hands clinched and his arms raised.

That the flush of rage at that moment disappeared from Signor Efferati's round face, and was succeeded by a somewhat pasty pallor, probably was due to the rude shock inflicted upon his highly strung artistic nature by Mr. O'Hallahan's very obvious intention to submit a difference of opinion in regard to an abstract financial matter to the coarse and in-

conclusive arbitrament of personal combat; and it doubtless was this same artistic supersensitiveness which led him, as Mr. O'Hallahan advanced, to step hastily behind the pile of luggage and musical instruments—where his faithful consort instantly enfolded him in her arms.

"Calm thyself, Seppino!" she cried. "Calm thyself! I, thy wife, implore thee! Be not overcome by thy fierce nature. What would happen to us shouldst thou kill this wretched man? In this barbarous country thy own death would follow. Thou wouldst be hung. Thy wife would be a widow. Thy children would be fatherless—and our combination would be broken up by the loss of its first mandolin! Govern then thy anger for our sakes. Pay anything to this brute rather than thus plunge us all into ruinous despair!"

While Signora Efferati delivered this moving appeal, she and Signor Efferati were circling rapidly together around the pile of luggage; which they thus continuously interposed between themselves and the violent Mr. O'Hallahan, who rapidly circled after them. The younger Efferati, standing in a row upon the steps of the Casa Napoléon and regarding anxiously the rotation of their imperilled parents, were a prey to the liveliest emotions of alarm. Behind them, drawn thither by the sounds of the affray, stood the nominal head of the Casa Napoléon, Don Anastasio, together with the Cuban waiter, Telésforo, the French waiter, Léon, and the French chambermaid, Marie. An interested crowd had collected in the street—the diverse languages

spoken by the various members of which being a sufficient indication of the proximity of the South Fifth Avenue approach to the Tower of Babel.

"Sacrifice thy anger for my sake, for all of our sakes, Seppino," again urged the Signora. "Do not imbrue thy hands with his vile blood. Give him what he demands, and let him go." To which she added, addressing Mr. O'Hallahan, "We do pay."

Upon the utterance of these words of surrender, Mr. O'Hallahan instantly ceased his belligerent demonstration; and as he resumed his coat and hat and fragment of cigar, resumed also his Milesian urbanity. "It's a rale leddy that y' are, ma'am, from the top o' your handsome head t' th' tips o' your tin pretty little toes," he said, gallantly. And he added, as he took promptly the five dollars which Signor Efferati most reluctantly held out to him: "It's th' ways o' th' counthry as your husband's not afther knowin' yet; but he'll larn 'em as he goes along, ma'am, don't you have no fear!"

As Mr. O'Hallahan drove away, leaving Signor Efferati standing amidst the boxed-up mandolins in a pose suggestive of a short and stout Marius amidst the ruins of a musical Carthage, the fire and fury of the artistic nature once more asserted itself. Signor Efferati drew a long breath, and as he shook his soft bunch of a fist after the retreating carriage he exclaimed: "Ah, Vittoria, why didst thou stay my avenging arm? Why didst thou interfere to prevent me from wreaking upon that insolent brigand the full measure of my wrath?"

"Calm thyself, my Seppino," answered the Sig-



"AH, VITTORIA, WHY DIDST THOU STAY MY AVENGING ARM?"

nora, soothingly. And, as she passed her arm within his and gently drew him away from the scene of his valorous encounter, she added: "Still within thy heart the fierce traditions of thy stormy race. Thy foe is crushed and vanished. Be no longer violent and cruel!"

And then Léon and Telésforo shouldered the trunks; Marie and Don Anastasio collected the portmanteaux and hand-bags; their several owners took each the case containing his or her musical instrument—and then the Efferati Family entered the hospitable doorway of the Casa Napoléon.

II

Fortunately for Mr. O'Hallahan, but unfortunately for the Efferati Family, the actual head of the Casa Napoléon did not reach the seat of war until after the battle was over; and therefore came too late to interpose her powerful forces as an auxiliary on the side of abstract justice. During the conflict Madame had been in her own chamber, dressing for the evening. She descended the stairs as the procession entered from the street, and became a very fountain of bubbling sympathetic indignation when the Signora explained to her the outrageous wrong that the departed Mr. O'Hallahan had put upon them.

In private Madame rated Don Anastasio roundly for permitting their guests to be imposed upon. It would give a bad name to the Casa Napoléon, she

said, if they suffered its frequenters thus to be despoiled by bandits at its very doors. Don Anastasio listened respectfully to his wife's protest, and then replied to it—accompanying his words with a gentle shrugging of his shoulders and a deprecating outturning of the palms of his hands—by citing at length the first Law, under the second Title, of the Fifth Partida of Alonzo the Wise, King of Castile: which law exhibits the three several ways whereby one man may become responsible for the safe-keeping of another man's property. Arguing from this quotation, he pointed out that Signor Efferati had not voluntarily given him the five dollars to hold in trust; nor had the charge of it been thrust upon him by the chance of natural disaster, such as flood, shipwreck, or fire; nor had it been confided to his keeping by Signor Efferati and Mr. O'Hallahan jointly, pending its whole or partial payment to one or the other of the parties in interest under the direction of a properly constituted court. Therefore, concluded Don Anastasio, triumphantly, he was no more responsible in the premises than was Alonzo the Wise himself—who died some six hundred years before this particular application of his wisdom was made.

Madame shocked Don Anastasio, and not a little pained him, by replying briskly that sentiments of this nature were all very well for a king in the dark ages, but she'd be bound that Alonzo the Wise would have sung a very different tune had he lived in New York in the nineteenth century, and made his living by keeping a hotel.

Yet, Madame's championship of the interests of the Efferati Family did not prevent her from making a tolerably close bargain with its business head as to the terms upon which it was to be boarded and lodged. She and the Signora argued the matter vigorously for half an hour before they came to a settlement. The terms finally agreed upon were six dollars and a half a day for the entire family; in return for which the family had two rooms on the top floor, its early coffee and bread, and its subsequent breakfast and dinner. Quite by accident, Madame omitted to mention the fact that the table wine was an extra. At the very least, that meant another dollar a day—of which eighty cents would be clear gain.

In accordance with the friendly customs which obtained in this easy-going little hotel, everybody spoke to the new arrivals when they came down to dinner; and as they themselves were of a most kindly nature—barring only the Signor, when by some ill chance his warlike and tempestuous spirit was aroused—the whole company presently was talking together in a polyglot of Spanish, Italian, and French, with the cordial frankness of friends who had known each other for years. Under these affable conditions it was not long before the history, the purposes, the aspirations, of the Efferati Family became almost as well known to the dwellers in the Casa Napoléon as they were to the members of that family themselves.

In brief, they were patriots and musicians. The Signor and the Signora—though the Signora did not for a moment admit that her entry into life be-

longed to so remote a period of antiquity—had been born in the very midst of that glorious struggle by which Italian unity was secured. Entering the world at this inspiriting epoch, they had come by their patriotic names almost as naturally as, subsequently, they had come by their necessary teeth: and they had lived up to these names gallantly. Signor Efferati was a Young Italian of the most pronounced sort—as he proved beyond a peradventure when he came on (between the first and second parts) wearing a sword and the red shirt to which his song related, and sang with a magnificent fervor, "La Camicia rossa"—to the glorious air and words of which Garibaldi's soldiers marched to victory. On these inspired occasions Signor Efferati simply was superb!

According to this patriot singer's own statement, it was the great misfortune of his life that he had not been bred to the career of arms. The traditions of his race, as his name sufficiently indicated, he would say—the while giving a fierce upward curl to his mustachios—were traditions of daredevil adventure and dangerous deeds. But the enemies of Italy—fortunately for their own well-being—had the wisdom to hide their diminished heads when Signor Efferati, who surely would have exterminated them, arrived at a fighting age. Therefore, his country having no need for his strong arm and resolute spirit, he had devoted himself to the career of music; and had strummed upon his mandolin, and to the accompaniment of that instrument had sung for himself, a brave way through the world.

That the Signora assigned the date of her birth to a period "long after the war was over," was a statement, probably, of desired rather than actual fact; yet was it entirely excusable in the case of a most charming woman who possessed—and who knew admirably well how to use—a most killing pair of brown eyes. There was a comfortable plumpness, a generous redundancy of outline, about the Signora's pleasing figure which would have led a critical observer—cool enough to remain critical under fire of her eyes—to infer that her age certainly was not less than five-and-thirty. However, her husband, who was as devotedly attached to her as she was devotedly attached to him, had declared for some years past that she was just turned of twenty-five.

It is certain that the eldest son of this most affectionate couple, Vittorio Emmanuele—named in honor of his mother, who had been named in honor of her King—was sixteen years old: which fact must be worked into the family arithmetic in any way that it will go. Umberto, the second son, was two years younger; and little Margherita was a miss of between eleven and twelve. There was an eye to business as well as to patriotism in the names of these younger children: "Umberto and Margherita, named in honor of the present King and Queen of Italy," made a capital point on the bills. That all three were born musical prodigies ought to go without saying. Each of the boys played upon the mandolin like a junior seraph, and little Margherita's touch upon that instrument was less like that of a half-grown girl than like that of a half-grown angel. When they all

played together, under the leadership of the paternal mandolin, and with energy and depth of tone added by the maternal double-strung guitar, the result was music so entirely heavenly that it was as though their enraptured audiences were listening to a celestial orchestra—and even were beholding the same, seated in a graceful curve with the celestial right legs of its several members crossed over their celestial left knees.

The entertainments given by this talented family were both vocal and instrumental. There were several choral numbers, with instrumental accompaniment; there were duos by the Signor and the Signora; the boys always evoked fits of laughter by their rollicking rendering of Neapolitan street ballads; and the First Part always ended with the "Hymn to the Virgin," sung by little Margherita in a manner so affecting that it rarely failed to draw from the feminine portion of the audience an ample tribute of tears. Between the parts, the Signor came out alone—wearing his red shirt and fairly blazing with the spirit of *Italia irredenta*—and gave "La Camicia rossa" in magnificent form. The Signora's corresponding triumph was the number next to the last in the Second Part: an especially vivacious Venetian love-song which she sang to the accompaniment of her double-strung guitar, and also to the accompaniment of her prodigiously fine brown eyes. At the end of it, in the thick of the applause, the bouquet was handed up to her. I say *the* bouquet because it always was the same bouquet. They carried it with them in a box especially provided for it, and it was

a work of art so admirable that—at least by gaslight—the flowers composing it seemed almost to be real. The presentation of the bouquet usually was a tremendous success because of a telling bit of comedy, of Signor Efferati's devising, which accompanied it, and which rounded off the naughty little love-song with a delightful touch of realism. Just as the Signora received the floral tribute from the hands of the usher, a three-cornered note always fell out from it and fluttered in the full view of the audience to the floor at her feet. Her own ample person interposing as a screen, the note could not be seen by her husband; yet would she give a most effective look of alarm over her shoulder as she picked it up and hastily thrust it into the liberally low-cut bosom of her gown. In the capitals of Europe, this act invariably brought down the house. It was a surprise to the Efferati Family that in America—at least in the Northern portion of America—it fell absolutely cold. The final number on the programme always was the national anthem of the country in which at the moment these talented Italians were winning fresh musical renown—and so extended had been their travels that, at one time or another, they had sung almost all the national anthems of the civilized world.

As to the gown in which the Signora appeared before a delighted public, it was—by gaslight—such a garment as even the Queen of Sheba in all her glory never wore: a gray silk skirt overlaid with lace and many flounces; a crimson body opening delectably over a most piquant lace corsage, and having a roll-

ing lace collar and short lace sleeves which displayed to the best advantage her charming throat and most agreeably rounded arms. The Signor, at one period, had worn the dress of a troubadour—an effect in garnet velvet that he had relinquished reluctantly, on the score of convenience, for conventional evening dress. This latter had the practical advantage of permitting him, when he came on in his red-shirt act, to replace his coat in a moment with the Garibaldian garment and be ready instantly to appear; and the change back again to evening dress could be effected with a like celerity before his return to the stage in the Second Part. It is true that his trig black trousers and patent-leather shoes looked a little odd in conjunction with the red shirt and the sword; but the Signor comforted himself by recalling the historic fact that Garibaldi's soldiers were not in the least particular as to what sort of shoes and trousers they wore—being only too thankful to have any at all. The boys were clad in purple velvet jackets with broad white collars; purple velvet breeches with brave buckles at the knee; black silk stockings, and patent-leather pumps: in which gallant array—their hair, like their father's, being cut short and most carefully brushed forward upon their foreheads—they looked as fine as jays. With a view to helping along the angelic illusion when she sang the "Hymn to the Virgin," little Margherita was dressed always with the utmost theatrical simplicity in a cloud of white muslin. Being a gentle, pretty little creature, the effect was charming. Indeed, in their time, few combinations more handsomely

arrayed than the Efferati Family were to be found upon the road.

III

In coming to New York, as the Signor frankly confided to his agreeable acquaintances that first evening at the Casa Napoléon, it was the intention of the Efferati Family to crown a victorious progress through the Americas by a magnificent triumph in the chief city of the New World.

They had marched conquering to the sound of their own music, he stated, from Buenos Ayres northward. Rio de Janeiro had lauded them, Caracas had cheered them, Guatemala had embraced them, the City of Mexico had gone wild over them; they had swept triumphantly through Guanajuato, Guadalajara, Zacatecas, and Chihuahua; when they crossed the Rio Grande they had been met with a whole-souled welcome at El Paso; they had won gold and glory in New Orleans. At this point Signor Efferati stopped abruptly and on his face was a look of pain. In a moment he added, speaking in a constrained voice: "And now we are in New York."

"We gave concerts in St. Louis," said the Signora in a low tone.

"It is a city of imbeciles!" said the Signor with a fierce contempt.

"And in Chicago," continued the Signora.

Obviously words were inadequate to express Signor Efferati's opinion of Chicago. He glared in a very horrible manner and ground his teeth.

"And in Philadelphia," concluded the Signora.

Signor Efferati groaned.

"Courage, my own!" said the Signora tenderly. "They told us that Philadelphia was not like other American cities; that it was a city apart."

"Heaven forbid that there should be another like it!" ejaculated Signor Efferati fervently. "Its people know not what Art is! Such dull coldness to the claims of music upon the soul is worse than the shameless neglect of St. Louis; it is almost as bad as the coarse and brutal mirth of Chicago!

"Fancy, Madame," Signor Efferati went on excitedly, addressing the hostess of the Casa Napoléon, "those wretches, those animals of Chicago interrupted many times our beautiful overture by crying 'Peanuts!' and by asking us that we should shine their boots! When I came on to sing 'La Camicia rossa' they jeered at my red shirt by crying 'Fire!' and that I should 'throw away the banjo and get a trumpet.' And what was most horrible of all, Madame, when our sainted little Margherita sang her 'Hymn to the Virgin,' to the tender accompaniment of all the instruments, one of the savages cried out: 'Stop them hand-organs, and let the monkey have a show!'"

"Fortunately it was not until afterward," explained the Signora, "that we knew the meaning of what was said—otherwise Giuseppe would have flown to where that savage was, and would have washed out the insult in blood."

"Yes, in blood!" said Signor Efferati corrobora-

tively, at the same time giving his mustachios a most ferocious upward curl.

"He is so terrible a man," added the Signora, "when his anger is aroused!"

"I cannot help it," declared Signor Efferati deprecatingly. "It is my misfortune that I inherit the spirit of my race. We Efferati did not receive our name for nothing, back in the past—our fierceness has been known and dreaded from the earliest times."

"As Don Anastasio himself saw," said the Signora, "it was only because of my strong entreaties that this very day Giuseppe refrained from slaying the odious driver of the carriage. Is it not so, Señor?"

Being thus directly appealed to, Don Anastasio, after a moment of hesitation, replied, diplomatically, "He did not kill him."

"It's a pity he didn't," Colonel Withersby struck in. "No jury on earth would convict a man for killing a New York hack-driver. They'd acquit him without leaving the box, and then they'd give him a vote of thanks."

"Has the Signor, your husband, killed a great many people?"

It was Doctor Théophile who asked this question. His manner was most polite, but there was something in his tone that grated a little harshly upon the Signora's ears. Don Anastasio, who was well acquainted with Doctor Théophile's sceptical and remonstrant habit of mind, took occasion just then to stroke his gray mustache with his hand. It is undeniable that beneath the cover of his hand Don Anastasio smiled.

After the delivery of Doctor Théophile's question there was a brief but rather awkward pause. Then Signor Efferati, equal to the occasion, dexterously relaxed the momentary strain by replying with dignity in his wife's place: "As the gentleman doubtless knows, it is as impossible for a man of spirit on his way through the world to avoid having affairs of the sword as it is for him to avoid having affairs of the heart; but it is as discreditable to him to boast of the one as it is dishonorable of him to boast of the other. Has the gentleman lived long in New York, may I ask?"

This handsome deliverance—while it certainly left the number of violent deaths for which Signor Efferati was responsible still in the realm of pure conjecture—was so entirely a retort courteous that even the perverse Doctor Théophile could not press for accurate statistics of the slain. With a wave of his hand and a courtly bow, in keeping with the polite traditions of his French descent and West Indian training, he accepted the obvious dismissal of the delicate subject, and replied that he had lived in New York for many years.

"Ah," said Signor Efferati. "The gentleman must know the town well. Perhaps he can make some suggestions of value as to the best manner in which musical artists—we ourselves, in short—can be introduced to the music-loving public of this great city. Is the gentleman himself an artist? and of the dramatic profession?—a tragedian, perhaps?"

Doctor Théophile, slightly disconcerted by the tendency to mirth which these questions excited

among the company, replied hastily and a little testily that he was not a member of the dramatic profession, but a physician; and added that he was quite incapable of giving advice of the nature which Signor Efferati desired.

"*Mais oui,*" interposed Madame. "We have with us here two very talented members of the profession, who doubtless can give you precisely the information which you require. Permit me to present to you, and to Madame, my friends Monsieur and Madame 'Arrison—who are known in the world of art as Monsieur Claude Dunbar and Mademoiselle Violet Bream. They do not speak other than the English tongue, but I shall be most happy to translate."

And then Madame, speaking in English, presented the Efferati Family to Ned and Polly Harrison—who were sitting at one of the corner tables, and who had been unable to take part in the conversation because of their ignorance of the various languages in which it had been carried on.

Being the most obliging souls in the world, and being thoroughly imbued with the fraternal spirit of their cordial kind, Ned and Polly were more than willing, of course, to give the Efferati Family a lift on the professional road. Moreover, they were in a position to give advice which had the merit of coming from people who knew what they were talking about—for Polly had not been a very long while graduated from song-and-dance business into the lightest of light opera; and Ned (though he was not nearly so frank about it as Polly was about her novitiate)

had served his time in a variety troupe before he earned his promotion to the minor walks of the legitimate drama which he so inconspicuously adorned. Therefore these young people gave to the Efferati Family—Madame obligingly acting as interpreter—much sound counsel; and the conference ended by their promising to put the Signor in relations with a trustworthy and capable theatrical agent the very next day.

"We rest upon roses!" observed Signor Efferati poetically, as he retired that night to the clean and comfortable bed provided for him in the Casa Napoléon—leaving to the Signora, as was his custom, the thankless office of putting out the light and finding her way to bed in the dark. "These friends of ours will make our triumphant way plain to us," he continued. "They will conquer for us all difficulties. Here it will not be as it was in that vile St. Louis, and in that despicable Chicago, and in that Philadelphia of ice. Here it will be as it was in New Orleans the bountiful. This New York, Vittoria, it is a city of success!"

That the Signora, under favorable conditions, would have responded sympathetically to her husband's outburst of prophetic enthusiasm does not admit of doubt. The conditions, unfortunately, were not favorable—for at the very moment that Signor Efferati reached his peroration she hit her shin a vicious crack against the rocking-chair in the dark. No one can take much interest in prophecy while suffering the severe pain that results from a sharp blow upon this most sensitive portion of the

human anatomy; and before the pain had subsided sufficiently to enable her to take a sympathetic part in the enjoyment of the vision of victory which her husband had conjured up for their mutual encouragement, the creator of the vision was sound asleep. In his dreams Signor Efferati pursued the same line of agreeable fancy: money poured into the family treasury; Fame blew her trumpet vigorously; every member of the Efferati Family wore a laurel crown!

IV

On the ensuing morning, her shin no longer paining her, the Signora rose to the situation and rejoiced with a good heart. Being of a more practical nature than her husband, she did not think much about the trumpet of Fame, nor about herself and the rest of the family crowned with laurel; but she did think, and with much satisfaction, that they were likely to open negotiations that day which would lead to a profitable engagement whereby would be made good the loss that had attended their recent run of bad luck.

It was the reasonable desire of the Signora to accompany the Signor to the office of the theatrical agent, and to assist in the framing of the contract that she hoped was to be drawn. Her faith in Signor Efferati as a musician and as a man of indomitable personal courage was unbounded; but she knew from experience that as a man of affairs he was not always a success. The Signor, however, who had the

utmost confidence in his own business capacity, insisted that her advice in the premises was unnecessary, and so went off without her in the company of the obliging Mr. Ned Harrison, who was to introduce, and of the obliging Don Anastasio, who was to serve as interpreter between, the high contracting powers.

Under these circumstances it was not unnatural that anxious doubts should beset the soul of the Signora whilst her husband fared abroad; doubts so painful that she found practice upon the double-strung guitar an impossibility, and found difficulty even in wording properly an appeal to the saints that the matter might come to a good end.

At the end of a couple of hours her anxious doubts seemed to be resolved into anxious certainties by the return to the Casa Napoléon of Signor Efferati in a state of towering rage. His short, crisp black hair fairly bristled, and his mustachios actually twitched with fury—by which outward and visible signs of the commotion that was within him the wife of his bosom perceived that the violent passions of his fiery race most terribly were aroused.

"What is it, my heart? What fresh outrage have these miserable Americans sought to put upon thee?" she inquired, in tones of tenderest concern, and at the same time sought to draw her highly explosive consort to the soothing retirement of her affectionate arms.

For the moment, Signor Efferati refused this offered consolation. Like another Ajax defying the lightning, he shook his imperfectly clenched fist to-

ward high heaven—that is to say, the ceiling—and at the same time stamped in fury upon the cowering earth—that is to say, the floor. "To think," he cried, "that the Efferati Family should be thus insulted! To think that it should be asked of us—I say of US!—to produce our pearls of music among the swine of a cheap show! To think that thou, my soul, my blessing—who excellest in thy playing upon the double-strung guitar the most highly trained among the angels—shouldst have thy divine music placed on the sickening level of the Bearded Woman and the Tattooed Man! To think of our beautiful children, the sweet pledges of our love and the inheritors of our genius, ranked as attractions with the Living Skeleton and the Two-headed Calf! I speak not of myself, Vittoria," the Signor went on bitterly. "Doubtless my playing upon the mandolin and my singing of 'La Camicia rossa' give but a paltry pleasure to the swinish multitude as compared with that which is afforded them by beholding the Champion Fat Woman and the Man Ape. Yes (though, as thou knowest, some of the greatest of the earth have borne flattering testimony to the contrary), my playing and my voice are poor and unworthy—"

"Cease, Seppino! It is blasphemy thus to speak of thy divine playing and of thy divine voice. Come hither and sit beside me, my heart, and tell me clearly of this cruel matter that has so torn thy soul."

"It is strange," said the Signor presently, as he sat beside his wife and suffered her to press his head gently against her shoulder and to stroke soothingly

his crisp black hair—"it is strange to me, Vittoria, that I came away and left alive the base wretch who insulted me, and still more thee, by making me this infamous offer, that I did not, then and there, instantly quench the insult with his blood!"

"Thou fierce and wilful one! How uncontrollable is thy raging fury! But tell me, what was his offer? Of the sort of place in which he desired that we should play, I understand; but how much did this odious man say that he would pay us for our playing?"

"He had the hardihood to offer twenty-five dollars a night," answered Signor Efferati, grinding out the words between his teeth.

"Twenty-five dollars—one hundred and twenty-five *lire*—a night? We have done worse than that, my soul; much worse. It is true, we also have done better. But, remember, it cannot always be with us as it was at New Orleans. We must earn money, heart of my heart—of late we have only lost it. What matters it where or how we make our account out of this country of savages? None of our kindred ever will know if now and then we suffer some slight humiliation; and we ourselves shall forget all when we are safe and happy in the little home in Italy with our fortune made. Instead of desiring to slay the wretched creature who made thee this offer, why didst thou not accept it—at least until something better shall offer in turn?"

"I have told thee that I did not slay him."

"Yes. Well?"

"I did accept his offer. We begin on Monday night."

And then, without a trace of his late furiousness, Signor Efferati calmly went into all the details of the agreement under which the Efferati Family was to appear at a dime museum in the Bowery; the engagement being for one week certainly, with the promise of an extension from week to week so long as the attraction should prove to be a paying success.

In many respects Signor Efferati was like a thunder-cloud; and in no respect was this similarity more marked than in the equable cheerfulness which possessed him the very moment that he had discharged the lightning of his rage. Being now safely delivered of his pent-up fury, he went on with enthusiasm to dilate upon the advantages which the engagement held out to them.

"It is an engagement for ages, thou perceivest, my angel," he said; "for it is to be continued until the public shall tire of us. For the public, even for this American public, to tire of us is impossible. If we desire that America shall be our home—here is our home made for us. We play on and on nightly at this liberal salary. We play through the months, through the years, through all our lives—and our children and our children's children play on after us. We cease to be a mere passing attraction; we become a permanent Institution of this great city; and the name of the Efferati becomes indissolubly associated with the musical history of America. Our surroundings will change—bearded women will die and be forgotten, tattooed men and living skeletons will pass unheeded from the public gaze and will be lost in nameless graves, such motes in the sunbeam

as champion fat women and two-headed calves and men apes will vanish unregretted into the abysms of time—but the Efferati Family will live on! Coming generations of our race will continue to delight coming generations of Americans down to the remotest ages; and our descendants, living always in a triumphal present, and always pressing forward confidently toward the ever-increasing triumphs of a magnificent future, will recall with an affectionate veneration the splendor of their glorious past. They will speak gratefully of us—of thee, Vittoria, and of me—as their illustrious progenitors; they will point to us proudly as the founders of their musical dynasty in the New World. And the Americans of those distant ages also will pay grateful tribute to our memory. It is not too much to believe that they will declare that even as they owe to the immortal Genoese, our great compatriot, the discovery of their continent, so do they owe to us, the Efferati, its endowment with that most perfect form of orchestral music which is found in the combination of four mandolins and a double-strung guitar. My only regret is that I did not introduce into the contract a clause by which, should we so desire, we would be free to terminate our engagement when our honors weary us and our wealth has swollen beyond the proportions of a miser's dream. But, in truth, I care not. Let us abandon the project of the little home in Italy, and frankly devote our lives to the musical regeneration of this noble country that so frankly has offered to us incalculable fortune and enduring fame. Forgetting our plans for our own mere selfish enjoy-

ment, let us consecrate ourselves and our offspring to the splendid purpose of perpetuating in this America our majestic Art! Embrace me, Vittoria, proud mother of a glorious race—and let us go instantly to breakfast. I am so hungry that I have a pain!"

V

It is a melancholy fact, but a fact of which Signor Efferati was wont to lose sight in his periods of artistic exaltation, that professional musicians who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and who pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that theatrical agents will perform the promises made in their behalf by their casual acquaintances, and that the deficiencies caused by an unsuccessful engagement in one city will be made good by a successful engagement in another, frequently are convinced of the illusory nature of these several acts and convictions without relinquishing the study of their own personal history in order to attend to that of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.

The particular and painful application of this general statement was brought home pointedly to Signor Efferati at the end of the engagement of one week that was to test the drawing qualities of the Efferati Family in New York. That week of trial was regarded by the proprietor of the dime museum as demonstrating the fact that the Efferati Family had not any drawing qualities at all.

"Th' whole blank bilin' of 'em ain't worth as much

as a third-class freak," he said, coarsely. "They just tinkle away at their little banjos that nobody more'n half hears, an' they just yawp away at their *I*talian songs that nobody knows nothin' about, an' nobody pays no more attention to 'em than if they was stuffed. Th' Armless Woman with her piano act with her toes ain't much, but she can give 'em points every time. She draws, th' Armless Woman does; an' that's what they don't. They're a bigger fraud than that blank Holy Land spectroscope was, an' what they've got t' do is t' git!" The proprietor of the museum spoke feelingly. The failure of the spectroscopic views of the Holy Land was of recent occurrence, and the bitterness of it still rankled in his soul.

Signor Efferati, thanks to his ignorance of English, was spared the pain of understanding this ribald arraignment of himself and his family and his art But he did understand that the engagement was ended; that on its very threshold the triumphant career of the Efferati Family in New York was cut short. Moreover, he was oppressed by the painful conviction that the proprietor of the museum was but protecting his own interests; for the fact could not be disguised that no response had come from the Bowery representatives of the music-loving public of New York to the appeal made to it by the four mandolins and the double-strung guitar.

"In this detestable land of swine, Vittoria," cried Signor Efferati in tones of mingled indignation and contempt, "what wouldst thou expect? It is a land of savage wild animals, who know nothing of the

charms of artistic excellence, and whose ears are deaf to the melodious allurements of musical skill. This America, I say, is a vast pen of pigs. I shake my fist at it! I pour out upon it the full measure of my disdain! My project for founding here a splendid line of musicians is abandoned! Let these wretched creatures make their own music—their own hideous parody of music—in their own hideous way! As for us, Vittoria, we will remain true to our patriotic instincts; true to our plan for ending our days happily in our own beloved Italy—where music and all things gracious and beautiful have their home. I will not lay my avenging hand upon this detestable country. Its miserable inhabitants may continue to live. But let us shake instantly its contaminating dust from off our feet and begone to our own dear land. Let us go, I say, at once!"

As he spoke these words, Signor Efferati snatched the red shirt from where it was hanging over a chair, rolled it into a tight bundle, and thrust it into one of the open trunks. He was continuing his hasty packing by folding his black trousers when the Signora laid her hand restrainingly upon his arm.

"Thou raging one!" she said. "Calm for a moment thy fury and think a little before thou decidest to abandon this land, leaving it crushed beneath the weight of thy hot hatred. There are parts of this America"—the Signora spoke with a slight hesitation—"which have not been good to us. I will not fan the flame of thy anger by naming the hateful cities which have rejected us. But remember, I beg of thee," she went on in more assured

tones, "the many cities which have welcomed us and which have poured out their treasure at our feet. Thou knowest how for years we have cherished together our plan for buying in our dear Italy the little home in which to spend happily the evening of our days. And thou knowest how slowly, how very slowly, the money came to us until in a good hour we crossed the seas to this rich land where money seems to sprout like grass—"

"Did money sprout like grass in St. Louis the hideous, in Chicago the revolting, in that Philadelphia of pitiless cold? Is it sprouting *here?*" interjected Signor Efferati, bitterly.

"Peace, my heart, peace!" replied the Signora in a soothing voice. "Hearken to me but a moment longer. Thou knowest that more than half of all that we have paid upon the little farm has been paid since we came to this good America. Thou knowest that only four thousand *lire*—eight hundred of these American dollars—remains to be paid, and then it will be all our own. In Italy we may give our concerts for a long, long time before we earn so great a sum. But here—if we can have again such fortune as attended us in Mexico and New Orleans—in half a year it will be ours. In two years of such fortune—and we well can afford two years, for we still are young—we will make ourselves as rich as people in a dream. We can buy an estate. It may happen that thou wilt be ennobled. Our children will make great marriages."

"What wouldst thou have me do?" asked Signor Efferati irresolutely. "Is it that we return to those

happy cities of the South? To return thither would cost more than a prince's ransom—in this land of nabobs where there is no third class."

"No," answered the Signora, with great firmness and with a gesture of exalted command, "I would not have thee return. I would have thee remain here to conquer! These excellent young friends of ours have not disguised from us the fact that in New York success is achieved with difficulty; but they have assured us that when success comes it is overwhelming. When once New York is conquered, the whole country is at our feet. We go everywhere—even to those cities which I will not name—and everywhere we are victorious. Therefore do I tell thee to remain and conquer New York! Thy noble courage will suffice thee for this enterprise. Once let thy heart of iron and soul of flame be aroused in all their valorous strength, and triumph is assured!"

There was this most fortunate quality of balance in the composition of the Efferati Family: when smiling Fortune beckoned onward to assured success, Signor Efferati was animated by a magnificent and irresistible enthusiasm which led him to hurl defiance at all the evil powers of Fate. When things were going the other way; when—as in the present instance—the evil powers of Fate had the Efferati Family, so to speak, fairly by the heels, it was the Signora who came to the front, and who stayed there until the emergency was passed and they were going along smoothly in deep water again.

Signor Efferati was accustomed to this reasonable

division of energy; and was accustomed also to accept in good faith (but not to acknowledge) his wife's leadership through the strait and rugged portions of his professional career. Therefore, when she thus resolutely addressed him, his heart of iron and soul of flame responded to her appeal—as he promptly manifested in acts by unfolding his partially folded black trousers and by removing his red shirt from the trunk; and in words by declaring that he not only relinquished his bitter purpose of cursing the American continent and thereafter instantly abandoning it to its withering fate, but that he was highly resolved to wrest from the Americans an abounding measure of both fortune and fame. Warming with his own enthusiasm, he added that rather than fail in either of these particulars, he freely would pour out his heart's blood.

"Thou great and noble soul!" cried the Signora, embracing him with a proud affection. "Thy strength is that of a tower of stone!"

"Thou flatterest me, angel of my heart," answered Signor Efferati, deprecatingly. "Yet art thou safe, my little one, to rest upon me for support. Fear not, Vittoria! my manly strength shall uphold thy womanly weakness through this season of bitter trial!"

VI

During the ensuing three weeks a sombre cloud of misfortune hung over the Efferati Family, and beneath this dismal canopy its several members moved mournfully in an atmosphere of gloom.

Under these trying conditions the staying-powers of the Signora as a leader of forlorn hopes were tolerably well tested, and they responded handsomely to the test. Whatever may have been her private convictions, her open avowals were unfailing prophecies of the speedy coming of that sunshine of success which would dispel their darkling misfortunes, even as the real sunshine dispels the mists of morn. The Signor did not sustain himself during this encounter with adversity with quite such flying colors. Accepting his wife's likening of him to a tower of stone, and continuing that simile, he may be said to have wabbled on his foundations, and to have cracked in his upper stories, and to have bulged badly at his sides. It would not be going too far, indeed, to affirm that on two or three occasions he fairly tumbled down and remained—until she picked him up and put him together again—a shapeless mass of ruins at her feet.

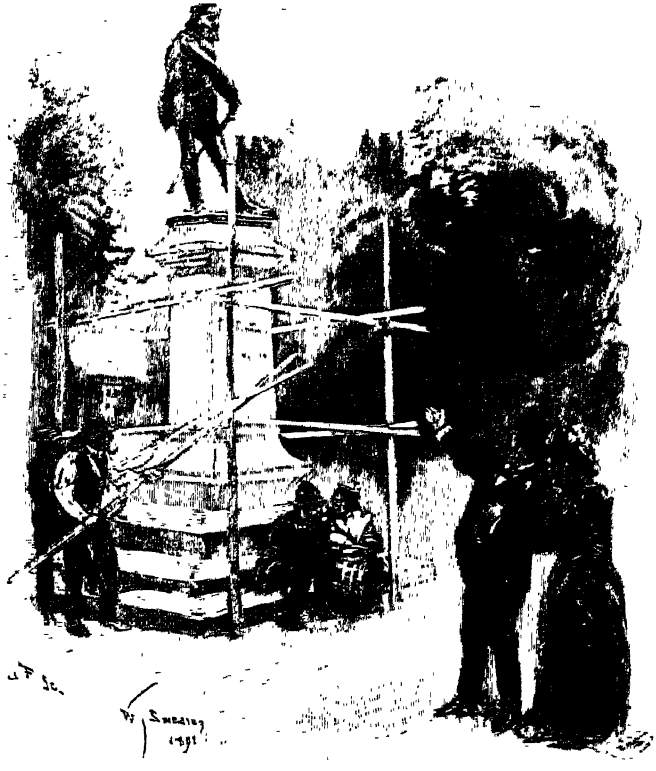
That the Signora herself at times broke under the strain of persistent misfortune is not to be denied; but she managed her temporary collapses in such a fashion that they were completely hidden within her own heart. When, at the end of a day of failure, she had strengthened Signor Efferati's defective masonry with cheerful words of buoyant prophecy as to what the next day would bring forth, and so had soothed him to refreshing sleep, she considered herself free to seek slumber on her own account through the damp and melancholy medium of tears; yet did she permit herself such solace of sorrow only in consideration of her self-made promise that

in the morning she would be again, for her husband's benefit, all hopes and smiles.

By day—having some distrust of the result should she leave Signor Efferati's heart of iron and soul of flame to their own devices—she took the management of the campaign into her own hands, and personally led the storming parties. With the Signor in her wake—and with a bilingual compatriot whom they retained as an interpreter—she attacked every theatrical agency in New York; and from these extended her assaults directly to every place of amusement in which there was the remotest chance that a musical combination would be taken on. But the upshot of this vigorous canvass of the city's professional possibilities was utterly disheartening. The answer of the managers was an unhesitating and unanimous No!—for the news had gone abroad in theatrical circles that in its Bowery engagement the Efferati Family had scored a distinct failure; and in view of that discouraging fact not a manager was willing to touch these luckless exponents of the mandolin and the double-strung guitar even with a pair of tongs.

"Fate is against us!" said Signor Efferati, gloomily. "Resistance on our part is useless; misery and misfortune have claimed us for their own. We will perish together, Vittoria! We will lie down beside our guitar and mandolins and die—and so wring from this inhospitable country the cold hospitality of a grave! See what we Italians do for America—and yet for us there is nothing in this ingrate land!"

They were crossing Washington Square as Signor



"SEE, IT IS FROM US THAT THIS NEW YORK RECEIVES ITS GLORIOUS GIFT!"

Efferati thus bitterly delivered himself, and that to which he drew his wife's attention was the monument to his great namesake, Garibaldi. Only that day had the statue been set in place upon its pedestal. Workmen were erecting a scaffolding, preparatory to the ceremonies which were to attend the unveiling on the ensuing Monday. On the pedestal was inscribed: *Gli Italiani degli Stati Uniti d'America eressero.*

"See," continued Signor Efferati, pointing to this inscription, "it is from us, from the Italians, that this New York receives its glorious gift! We give the statue of our great compatriot because nature has made us noble, and we go through life with both hands opened wide. And what do they do in return for our generosity, these close-fisted niggards of New York? Truly it is a brave return that they make us! They shut their doors against us; they spurn us from their presence; they drive us forth into the wilderness to starve among wild beasts! Such is their gratitude! Let us hasten home to our breakfast, Vittoria—and then let us pack our few poor belongings, while even these yet remain to us, and then abandon instantly and for ever this land accursed of Heaven and given over to miserly swine!" For once Signora Efferati did not see her way clear to intervening between the American continent and its people and her husband's wrath. In fact, her own feeling toward America and the Americans now was such that she was inclined to permit Signor Efferati freely to hurl against the one and the other his blighting curse. To be sure, so far, New

York had supported them, for they still were living on the cash proceeds of their week of failure in the Bowery. But the fact that New York quite plainly had intimated its indisposition to support them any longer was enough to prove that it was peopled, even as Signor Efferati had declared, by mean and sordid souls. Therefore the Signora kept silence as they walked onward to their hotel, and permitted her husband to comment with an energetic freedom upon the continent and the people that had played them false. The Italian is a language that abounds in epithets of censure, disparagement, contempt, and scorn. Signor Efferati used them all!

A good breakfast, however, has charms which tend to soothe the savage breast; and when this violent apostle of the mandolin had finished his really excellent breakfast he grew somewhat more calm. Yet his purpose to abandon America by the very first steamer sailing for an Italian port was not relinquished; nor was this purpose any longer opposed by his wife. They were quite agreed, at last, that their business success and their self-respect alike demanded their dignified but expeditious retirement from the Western Hemisphere.

Consultation with Don Anastasio revealed the fact that the *Iniziativa*, of the Florio line, would sail on the ensuing Saturday for Naples; whereupon, taking with them their bilingual compatriot as a guide, they went straightway to the Florio office and engaged their passage. In order to secure their berths it was necessary, the clerk informed them, that they should pay down ten per cent. of their

passage-money; which payment, he added warningly, would be forfeited should they fail to be on board when the vessel sailed. Upon hearing this absurd warning the Signora smiled so generously that every one of her fine white teeth plainly was to be seen. That they should fail to be on board was the very height of the ridiculously impossible! And then her charming brown eyes filled with tears as the tender thought exalted her that in so short a time she would see her own dear Italy again.

"My Seppino, I am so full of gladness that I must kiss thee," she cried. "The thought of the dear home almost breaks my heart for joy!"

Whereupon she did kiss Signor Efferati most vigorously—while the clerk and the bilingual compatriot looked on with envy, and earnestly wished that her expansive happiness might become sufficiently comprehensive to include them in the kissing.

"Heart of my heart," said the Signora when her affectionate demonstration was well ended, "I am frantic as I think that we truly are going. It seems impossible for me to wait through these limitless long two days which must pass before the ship will carry us away!"

And yet—such is the mutability of things earthly—the earnest-money which they had paid was forfeited; the *Iniziativa* sailed without them; and the Signora, willingly and gladly, waited through not only two days, but through two entire years for the ship which at last did carry her back to her loved Italian home.

AT THE CASA NAPOLÉON

VII

The radical change above indicated in the programme of the Efferati Family began to be made the very moment that they returned to the Casa Napoléon. In the little parlor of that modest hotel they found waiting for them a personage whose physical proportions were so considerable, and whose port was so largely dignified, that he gave the impression of much more than filling the room. The Signora, whose eyes were as quick as they were irresistible, instantly recognized in this magnificent being the proprietor of a great variety theatre; and as she recognized him her heart gave a bound.

Don Anastasio was in waiting to serve as interpreter. The manager was a man of few words, and he came to the point with the utmost directness: he wished to engage the Efferati Family to appear at his theatre during the ensuing week, opening on Monday evening, June 4th—the evening of the day on which the Garibaldi statue would be unveiled. He desired that the programme should be intensely Italian, and largely made up of Italian patriotic songs. He would pay twenty-five dollars a night —the rate which the Signora had suggested would be satisfactory when she had called upon him in his office a fortnight before.

"Tell him that we accept!" cried Signor Efferati almost before Don Anastasio had ceased speaking.

"Stop!" cried the Signora, raising a warning hand. "Tell him that we have this moment returned from

engaging our passage by the steamer which leaves on Saturday, and that we refuse."

Between these conflicting statements of intention Don Anastasio hesitated.

"It is that he must pay us more—but do not yourself yet tell him that," explained the Signora.

And then Don Anastasio, perceiving the subtle wisdom of the Signora's method, went ahead.

It is unnecessary to trace through all its stages the negotiation which followed between Signora Efferati on the one hand (Signor Efferati was out of the running from the start) and the manager on the other. The manager had determined to have an attraction during the week of Italian festival which would rope in, as he brusquely expressed it, the peanut and banana crowd; and the Signora, perceiving this determination, was for her part determined that she would make her account out of it. A woman's will, of course, is far stronger than the will of a mere manager; and the Signora really had what seemed to be a very plausible argument in support of her demand for high pay in the forfeited ten per cent. of the passage-money—for she neglected to state that the forfeit was based on steerage rates, and that (little Margherita and Umberto having been lumped in one fare) the total amount to be surrendered was precisely twelve dollars. So the upshot of the matter was that the manager raised his offer gradually until he got it up to fifty dollars a night; and when the Signora found that he certainly would not go any higher, and was beginning to show signs of throwing over the whole business in

disgust, she accepted with a very well-acted show of reluctance these truly magnificent terms.

As to the wonderful success of the engagement that followed—extended to four weeks, repeated in the two following seasons, and assuring an extraordinarily brilliant tour through the principal cities of the United States—it all is a matter of such recent occurrence that no more than the merest mention of it is necessary here. It is sufficient to say that a more splendid tribute to the deserved merits of a musical combination is not recorded in the annals of the variety stage.

Without prejudice to the substantial elements of success residing in the Efferati Family, however, the fact may be admitted that intelligent advertising had much to do with the brilliant triumph of the opening night; which triumph cleared the way for all the later victories.

On the day of the Italian festival—from Mulberry Bend to Macdougal Street, and everywhere along the line of the parade—there was a lavish scattering of red, white, and green handbills announcing the appearance that evening of the Efferati Family at the Mammoth Metropolitan Variety Theatre, and dilating upon the patriotic nature of the entertainment which this eminent Italian musical combination there would give. Beneath these stirring announcements, Washington Square, the centre of the demonstration in honor of Garibaldi and Italian unity, may be said to have disappeared. But there was a better touch still. At the end of the parade came an omnibus containing a bass-drum

and a number of violent brass instruments which together poured forth Italian patriotic airs tempestuously. Italian flags waved above the omnibus, and on its sides was blazoned in red and green letters on a white muslin ground this inspiring legend:

> Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Patriot, is Dead!
> Giuseppe Garibaldi Efferati, the Musician, still Lives!
> Hear the Efferati Family to-night, and every night this week, at the Mammoth Metropolitan Variety Theatre in Patriotic Italian Songs.

This presentment was made in the Italian language. From the windows of the omnibus were distributed red, white, and green handbills, also in the Italian language, giving the patriotic programme. At the bottom of the bills was a blaze of patriotic Italian sentiment that fairly made things hum!

VIII

By half after eight o'clock that evening the sign "Standing-room only" was displayed above the box-office window of the Mammoth Metropolitan Variety Theatre; and such a jam of Italian patriots as there was inside of that building never had been gathered into one single American theatre before!

The patriots simply took the performance into their own hands and ran it to suit themselves. The Busterby Sisters got as far as one verse in their famous character song, "Rollicking Betty and Bouncing Jane"—and then fled behind the scenes from the

storm of shouting with which their musical utterances intentionally were drowned. In like manner, Ham Spartacus and Ikey Wild, song-and-dance men, and Mr. Harkwell Hyatt, the Protean Impersonator, summarily were disposed of. Ching-Po, the Chinese Champion Contortionist, and Murrell and Skeat, the Champion Roller-Skaters, not yielding to vocal persuasion, were driven off the stage under fire of volleys of banana-peel. When the manager himself tried to quiet things down by coming on with his famous sentimental song, "Mamie's Eyes are Wet with Tears," he was received not with the applause usually accorded to this great vocal effort, but with howls and yells. And all the while the patriots shouted: "The Efferati!" "Bring the Efferati!"—and cheered for Garibaldi, and Italian unity, and red shirts, and Italy redeemed!

Therefore, far ahead of their place in the programme, the Efferati Family came on—and the only wonder is, so tremendous was the roar of welcome with which they were greeted, that the roof did not at the same moment go off. Nothing like their reception, nothing like the way in which they carried the house with them, is chronicled in the history of variety performances in New York. The concerted pieces were cheered with a rapturous enthusiasm, and the soloists were recalled again and again. For the first time since leaving New Orleans the Signora's naughty little Venetian love-song was fully appreciated; and when the bouquet was handed up to her, and the note tumbled out of it, and she gave the frightened glance toward her husband, the

house came down in a tumult of applause. When the boys sang their rollicking Neapolitan street ballads, the patriots simply screamed with laughter—and came into the choruses with a regular whirl and roar. And when little Margherita sang her "Hymn to the Virgin," all the female patriots shed tears freely; and there was such a general blowing of large Italian noses by the time that little Margherita got along to the last verse that her singing scarcely could be heard at all.

As to the tempest which broke forth when Signor Efferati, with that brilliant garment upon his back, came on and sang "La Camicia rossa," words fail even vaguely to describe it! Eight times was Signor Efferati compelled to repeat "La Camicia rossa"; and he probably would have been kept repeating it to this very moment had not the happy thought occurred to him, on the occasion of his ninth recall, to slide off into the "Star-spangled Banner"—which, being received with a very handsome enthusiasm, tended to let the patriots down gently from the heights of patriotism whereto they had been exalted by their own thunderous backing of Signor Efferati in the chorus and by their interpellated yells and shouts in regard to Italy redeemed!

It was one o'clock in the morning when at last the patriots consented to go away; and they went then only in response to an urgent appeal to them to go —made by Signor Efferati at the express request of the manager—coupled with a gradual turning out of the gas. As the last of them vanished, the Signor and Signora, by a common impulse, precipi-

tated themselves into each other's arms and wept freely upon each other's shoulders tears of the purest joy. Not only had they achieved a magnificent triumph: by this triumph, as their prophetic souls correctly informed them, their musical conquest of America was assured!

IX

Two years later—in which period the prophecy of that happy moment had been abundantly fulfilled—the members of the Efferati Family, bearing their sheaves with them, stood upon the deck of an Italian steamer and watched the Jersey Highlands sink away slowly into the bosom of the west. With a magnificent gesture toward the retreating continent, and with a noble fervor, Signor Efferati spoke:

"It has won my heart, Vittoria, this America! It is superb!" He paused for a moment, and then in exalted tones continued: "In my anger, in the wild turmoil of that ungoverned passion which is the heritage of my fierce race, I once crushed this meritorious country beneath the ponderous burden of my curse. Behold! That curse now is lifted! America shall continue to prosper! *I* desire that it shall be blessed!"

THE EPISODE OF THE MARQUES DE VALDEFLORES

I

ANTONIO HILARION DOMINGUEZ MEDRANO Y CORELLA, Marques de Valdeflores. When this brilliant name, with its pendent rubrica, was written by the nobleman to whom it pertained upon the register of the Casa Napoléon there ran through that establishment a thrill which may be said to have shaken it, figuratively speaking, from stem to stern.

As a rule, the frequenters of the Casa Napoléon were not noblemen. The exceptions to this rule were sporadic French counts, whose costly patronage by no means was to be desired. Thanks to Madame's worldly wisdom—sharpened to a very fine edge by five-and-twenty years of hotel-keeping—these self-constituted members of the French nobility rarely got ahead of her. She "zized 'em up," as she expressed it, promptly; and as promptly they received their deserts: that is to say, they were

requested to pay in advance or to move on. Then they moved on.

But a nobleman from Old Spain, a genuine nobleman, and so exalted a personage as a Marques, was quite another thing. This was a splendor the like of which was unknown in all the years during which the Casa Napoléon had run its somewhat checkered but, on the whole, successful career. Madame, though an Imperialist rather than a Legitimist, in her political creed, had a soulful respect for a title —which respect she manifested on this occasion by putting the silk coverlet on the bed in the best apartment, and by hurriedly removing the brown holland slips from the red plush sofa and from the two red plush arm-chairs. Don Anastasio—whose royalist tendencies had led him into a revolution in Mexico that had ended in not leading him, but in most violently projecting him, out of it—rejoiced in the honor attendant upon entertaining so distinguished a representative of the principles for which, he was accustomed to declare, he had suffered martyrdom. That he might lift himself to the high plane of the situation, he lighted one of the choicest of his reserved stock of smuggled cigars, and smoked it to the health of the King of Spain. Telésforo, the Cuban negro who waited in the dining-room upon the Spanish-speaking patrons of the house, retired hurriedly to his den in the basement and put on his clean shirt: which was not due, in the natural order of things, until the ensuing Sunday. Even Léon—the one-eyed French waiter; a pronounced Red, who openly boasted that he had lost his eye while



WHEN THIS BRILLIANT NAME WAS WRITTEN UPON THE REGISTER, THERE RAN THROUGH THAT ESTABLISHMENT A THRILL

fighting in the Commune behind a barricade—so far yielded to the spirit of the hour as to put on the clean paper collar which (keeping it in the rarely used large soup-tureen) he held in reserve for occasions of especial festivity. Marie, the trig chambermaid, stuck a bow of cherry-colored ribbon in her black hair. No more was required of her. Without any extra adornment, Marie at all times was as fresh and as blooming as the rose.

As it was with the proprietors and the retainers of the Casa Napoléon, so was it also with the *habitués* of that rather eccentric but most comfortable establishment. Colonel Withersby, who had not been wholly successful in his latest venture in tramway promotion in Nicaragua—who had been compelled, in fact, to leave Nicaragua with such inconsiderate celerity that his exodus might with propriety be termed a flight—was cheered by the hope that Heaven had thrown in his way an opportunity to promote a tramway in some city (any city, he was not particular) in Spain. Monsieur Duvent, the dealer in a very respectable French gaming-establishment in South Fifth Avenue, stroked thoughtfully his respectable gray mustache and made a few trifling mental calculations in regard to the relative values of current Spanish and American coins. Mrs. Myrtle Vane, who was connected with the press, perceived at least a society item in the situation; possibly, should the Marques prove to be in any way a scandalous personage, a half-column article for the Sunday edition. Mrs. Mortimer—who, presumably, was a person of substance; for she occupied

a handsome apartment on the first floor, yet she toiled not, neither did she spin—listened to Marie's account of the arrival of the Marques with an expression of much interest. Thereafter she descended to dinner clad in raiment of price that far outshone in splendor the modest beauty of the lilies of the field—a species of vegetation with which, in point of fact, Mrs. Mortimer had but little in common.

Dr. Théophile alone refused to accept the Marques at his face value. "Pooh!" said Dr. Théophile, rudely, when Don Anastasio called him into the office that evening and showed him the magnificent name upon the register. "Pooh! He is not a real Marques. That is moonshine. A nobleman of that calibre, Don Anastasio, does not come to the Casa Napoléon. Now and then, I grant you, you have here a rich planter from the islands or from the Spanish Main; and now and then a revolutionist who has been lucky enough—as you were—to get away with some of the revolutionary swag. But a genuine Marques, and from Old Spain, and rich? Oh no, Don Anastasio; that is only a dream! If he is a Marques, he certainly is without money; if he has money, he certainly is not a Marques—and the chances are that he has neither title nor cash. I saw something in the *Epoca* last week about a monté dealer who had to leave Barcelona in a hurry. No doubt your Marques is that very man."

However, Dr. Théophile was a natural-born remonstrant. It was he who assailed Don Anastasio's claim to martyrdom in the royalist cause. The

Doctor's contention was that Don Anastasio would have lived a most miserable life, ending in an early and uncomfortable death, had not good fortune wafted him hurriedly out of Mexico and safely deposited him in New York—where his days were long in the land, and very pleasant to him in the comfortable haven in the Casa Napoléon that he had secured by his judicious marriage with Madame. Don Anastasio, who could afford to be heroic in the circumstances, denied Dr. Théophile's points absolutely, and clung to the belief in his martyrdom with an affectionate fervor—that did not in the least interfere, however, with his contentedly wearing shabby raiment and soiled linen and faring sumptuously every day. Indeed, the excellent food that Madame gave him to eat, and the sound Bordeaux that she gave him to drink, would have gone a long way toward squaring accounts with a martyr whose martyrdom had been of a much more vigorous sort.

After this denial of the validity of the Marques there was something of a coolness between Dr. Théophile and Don Anastasio; that endured until too much of Madame's rich food, and too much of that especial old Bordeaux, brought on one of Don Anastasio's bilious attacks, and so compelled him to resort to Dr. Théophile for physicking. Madame, who was short and round, and of a most quick and resolute temperament, did not suffer her resentment of the aspersions upon the genuineness of the Marques to take the form of a mere coolness; it took the form of a very positive warmth. In her native

clipped and softened French of Toulouse, she rated Dr. Théophile most roundly for venturing to call in question the honor of the nobleman within her gates—who, in a most nobleman-like manner, was running up a bill at the rate of from five to seven dollars a day. To this rating Dr. Théophile, in his much more clipped and still softer French of Guadeloupe, replied temperately that he would not then discuss the matter farther; but that he would have much pleasure in resuming it at a later period, when time in its fulness should have tested their conflicting opinions in the crucible of practical results. He was wise in his generation, was this Dr. Théophile. His warrings were not with womenkind. With a man, he said, he was ready at all times to do battle with tongue or pistol or sword. But with a woman—no! A woman, he declared, was an inconclusive animal. You might grind her between irrefutable arguments until you had reduced her to figurative fragments—and at the end of this somewhat shocking process she simply would reiterate her original proposition with a calmly superior smile. Yet the women liked Dr. Théophile. There was current an old-time rumor that the cause of his leaving Guadeloupe was a dismal blight that had fallen upon his heart. A man whose past has in it a bit of sad romance like that is an object of tender solicitude to every right-natured woman; and he easily finds forgiveness on the part of such gentle judges for saying evil things about the sex that has done him so cruel a wrong.

II

Meanwhile, the Marques de Valdeflores—blissfully ignorant of the doubts cast by Dr. Théophile upon his wealth and his patent of nobility, and ignorant also of the various amiable designs formed by the resident population of the Casa Napoléon for assisting in the distribution of that wealth and for rendering that nobility commercially valuable—continued in apparent contentment to occupy Madame's best apartment, to eat largely of the admirable food which she caused daily to be prepared for him, and to drink most liberally of her excellent wines.

He was a very affable personage, was the Marques. "You might think that he wasn't a nobleman at all!" was Madame's admiring comment when telling of the frank and entirely unaffected way in which he had borrowed a dollar of Telésforo, the Cuban negro, to pay his cab fare.

"You might know that he was not," was the cynical comment of Dr. Théophile, to whom this gracious fact was told.

Fortunately for the credit for hospitality of the Casa Napoléon, Dr. Théophile was the only one of the several dwellers in or frequenters of that establishment who manifested the least disposition toward standing the Marques off. The others, to do them justice, more than atoned for Dr. Théophile's coldness by their effusive friendliness. With a frank cordiality charming to contemplate they severally and collectively did their very best to make him feel

that, so far from being a stranger in a strange land, he was very much at home among genuine friends. As tending still farther to emphasize this international comity, it was even more delightful to observe the gracious friendliness with which these friendly advances were met and reciprocated. Having lived long enough in the world—he was a personable man, in the prime of his mature manhood—to know how rarely the perfect flower of friendship blooms, and possessing, moreover, the open-hearted temperament of the South, it was only natural, though on that account none the less pleasing, that the Marques should do his part to show his grateful appreciation of the hospitable kindness that was showered upon him. That he did his part was admitted by everybody but the remonstrant Dr. Théophile, who declared morosely that he overdid it.

Mrs. Myrtle Vane, who sat beside him at the ordinary, succeeded in getting a good column article out of him on the very first evening of their acquaintance. The Marques told her some very racy stories about Spanish court life; and she worked them up —her knowledge of Spanish, a language universally current in the Casa Napoléon, enabling her to throw in a word here and there that gave them local color —in a fashion that made them still racier. As special correspondence, under a Madrid date, they were a decided hit in the Sunday edition. The editor voluntarily gave her six dollars and a half the thousand words, and told her to go ahead and get some more. It was as good stuff as he ever had come across, he said. It certainly was admirably scandalous. Mrs.

Vane perceived that she had opened a gold mine—for the story-telling powers of the Marques appeared to be inexhaustible—and she worked it with a will. Feeling under a real obligation to the nobleman who so considerably was increasing her weekly income—she was a kind-hearted soul, not nearly so sophisticated as her very highly spiced illiterary productions would have led one to suppose—she was glad to have an opportunity to show her appreciation of his kindness by inviting him to accompany her, on a press order, to an evening at the play. In the spirit in which it was offered, the Marques accepted this polite invitation. It struck him that there was something slightly pathetic about it. After the performance he treated Mrs. Vane—at a certain restaurant well known for its shady reputation and for the brilliant achievements of its *chef*—to the very best supper that she had eaten in the whole course of her life.

"He's a perfect high-toned gentleman," Mrs. Vane declared when recounting to Mrs. Mortimer rapturously—for little suppers came rarely in her life—this extraordinary and delightful experience. "He ordered all the highest-priced things on the bill of fare, and he set up the wine as if it was water; and he never offered to do more than just nicely squeeze my hand. I don't care what spiteful things Dr. Théophile says about him; after that I know that he's a perfect high-toned gentleman all the way through!"

Inasmuch as Mrs. Mortimer, according to the repeated assertion of Colonel Withersby, was a perfect

high-toned lady herself, it is reasonable to suppose that she found pleasure in listening to this handsome eulogy; and it is creditable to her generous impulses to suppose, also, that when, a few days later, she invited the Marques to a little supper in her own apartment, she was actuated by an amiable desire to repay in kind his kindness to her friend.

Mrs. Mortimer was a delightful hostess, and her little suppers were renowned. To be sure, those who partook of them were apt to find that in the long-run they came rather high; but this trifling drawback upon a pure enjoyment of her hospitality was immaterial, inasmuch as, with a characteristic thoughtfulness, she uniformly selected her guests from that moneyed class which is superior in matters of amusement to considerations of expense.

On this particular occasion, it is needless to say that the Marques enjoyed his supper with Mrs. Mortimer. That Mrs. Mortimer enjoyed her supper with the Marques is a matter less absolutely assured. When he bade her good-night, bowing over her hand very gracefully, and with a gallant and high-bred courtesy kissing the tips of her white fingers, it is undeniable that he left her in a decidedly bewildered state of mind. All that Mrs. Vane had told of his dignified reserve she perceived was true. Her acquaintance with the higher nobility was extremely limited. If this were a fair specimen of that class she was fain to admit that its members were anything but easy to understand. Her one

coherent concept in the premises was the unpleasant conviction that her little supper had not been an unqualified success.

Nor did Monsieur Duvent, as the result of his lavish expenditure of friendship upon the Marques, receive any very adequate return. Having travelled a great deal, professionally, in Spain, he began his friendly advances by intelligent encomiums of that country. The Marques met his complimentary comments by the polite declaration that praise of his native land always was dear to him, but that it was doubly dear when bestowed with accurate discrimination by one who obviously knew it well; after which he made several exceedingly handsome speeches to Monsieur Duvent in regard to France. Their talk running lightly upon the more superficial characteristics of their respective countries, there was nothing forced in Monsieur Duvent's remark that he had been much struck—he did not add that his opportunities for being struck in this fashion had been decidedly exceptional—by observing the passionate and universal devotion of the Spanish race to gaming. In reply, the Marques courteously denied that the taste for gaming was universal among his countrymen, but at the same time admitted frankly that it was very general; he even added, smilingly, that he shared in it himself. To permit one's self to be carried away by this passion, he observed with an admirable morality, was a most serious mistake; but within due bounds, he continued, with a morality less severe, he knew of no amusement more interesting than judiciously con-

ducted games of mingled chance and skill played for heavy yet not excessive stakes.

Naturally, this discourse was very exactly to Monsieur Duvent's mind; and still more to his mind was the prompt acceptance by the Marques of the obliging offer to afford him an opportunity for gratifying his taste for gaming in New York. As for the moral reflections that had accompanied the avowal by the Marques of his amiable weakness, Monsieur Duvent attached but little importance to them. In the course of his very extensive experience in these matters he frequently had heard expressed sentiments of this temperate sort; and as frequently had seen them scattered, in time of trial, like smoke before the wind.

What very much surprised Monsieur Duvent, therefore—when, in due course, the Marques was introduced into the quiet and intensely respectable gaming establishment in South Fifth Avenue—was to observe that the temperateness of his new friend in deeds was precisely in keeping with his temperateness in words. The Marques played with a handsome liberality, but also with a most phenomenal coolness. He followed his luck boldly yet prudently; he dropped his bad luck instantly; and his experienced wisdom was manifested by the obvious fact that he adhered to no "system," and recognized in the game no principle save that of the purest chance. At the end of an hour or so, when he nodded pleasantly to Monsieur Duvent and withdrew, the bank was much the worse for his visit. Monsieur Duvent, whose income was largely in the nature of commis-

sions, was decidedly dissatisfied. In this case the commission had gone the wrong way. The unpleasant fact must be added that in the course of the subsequent visits paid by the Marques to that quiet banking establishment—fortunately he did not come often—his aggravating good fortune remained practically unchanged. Being only human, Monsieur Duvent suffered his friendship for the Spanish nobleman appreciably to cool.

III

Colonel Withersby's acquaintance with the Marques opened under conditions so auspicious as to inspire in the breast of that eminent promoter the most sanguine hopes. At that particular juncture the Colonel, as he himself expressed it, was "in a blanked bad hole." He had made the fatal mistake, in the hope of larger winnings, of standing by the Nicaragua tramway enterprise until it was too late for him to get out before the smash. As the result of his unwise greed he had lost not what he had put into the tramway company, for he had not put anything into it, but what he had expected to take out of it. Farther, and this was where the pinch came, his reputation as a promoter had been most seriously injured. Owing to circumstances over which he had had entire control, the Colonel's reputation—either as a promoter or as anything else—was of a sort that no longer could be trifled with. There was very little of it left, and that little was

bad. But, until this unlucky twist in Nicaragua, his shrewdness in invariably getting out before the smash, and his handsome conduct in uniformly giving the straight tip to his fellow-occupants of the ground floor, always had enabled him to smile at disasters in which only the innocent suffered; and, presently, with a fresh supply of innocents, to make a fresh and not less profitable start.

In the Nicaragua affair no unpleasant reflections were cast upon the Colonel's honesty by his immediate friends; had any one suggested that he possessed a sufficient amount of honesty to catch even a very small reflection they doubtless would have smiled; but they frankly and profanely admitted that their confidence in his sagacity was destroyed. In their coarse but hearty manner they declared that they would be blanked before they would chip in with such a blank fool again. When the most intimate friends of a promoter use language of this sort about him, it is evident that his sphere of usefulness in promotion must be materially contracted. In the case of Colonel Withersby it was contracted about to the vanishing point. In his prompt military way (he had served, with a constantly increasing credit to himself, as a sutler in the late war) he perceived how shattered were his frontiers, and how gloomy was the outlook toward their rectification; and therefore it was that he described himself as being "in a blanked bad hole." His profane emphasis was borne out by the facts.

Naturally, the coming of the Marques de Valdeflores at this critical juncture was regarded by the



COLONEL WITHERSBY, PROMOTER OF RAILWAYS

Colonel as nothing less than providential. Not only was the acquaintance of a rich nobleman desirable on general principles—since such a personage might reasonably be expected to subscribe liberally to any stock, and to give strength to any company by permitting the use of his name on the board of direction—but the Colonel saw much that was comforting in the opening possibility of shifting his promoting interests from Spanish America to Old Spain. In the colonies he was forced to contend against the adverse influence of his own widely diffused reputation as a too skilful financier—a reputation that most seriously militated against his promoting anything whatever. In the parent country, as both hope and modesty advised him, there was a fair chance that he might carry on business quietly, unhampered by his own renown.

Taking this cheerful view of what a friendship with the Marques was likely to do for him, he spoke only the literal truth when he told that nobleman that he would have much pleasure in showing him the town. As the event proved, the Marques was not desirous of seeing the town within the full meaning of the Colonel's words; but he repeatedly did accept invitations to the theatre, and also accepted cheerfully the refreshments of a vinous nature offered to him by the Colonel with an excellent hospitality in the intervals and at the ends of the several performances which they witnessed together. That on these and on all other possible occasions he should have his attention pointedly directed to the subject of tramways was a foregone conclusion, for tram-

ways were the very essence of the Colonel's life. What was more surprising, and to the Colonel eminently pleasing, was the fact that he manifested in regard to tramways an intelligent interest. He mentioned, by way of explaining his possession of so unusually large a fund of accurate information upon this subject, that he owned some shares in a tramway company recently organized in Madrid. The enterprise had turned out very well, he said; so well, indeed, that he greatly regretted that when the shares first were put upon the market he had not taken a larger block. This was a sentiment that the Colonel never had heard advanced by a single one of the numerous purchasers of shares which he himself had floated. It surprised and delighted him. Here indeed was a field the working of which promised well. And so vigorously did Colonel Withersby proceed to work it that within a week he and the Marques were discussing energetically the details of a plan for building an urban tramway—eventually to have suburban extensions — in the city of Tarazona. That the Colonel never before had so much as heard the name of this city—it was selected because the most considerable of the estates of the Marques lay near to it—did not in the least interfere with his going into the enterprise heart and soul. The name was a good one for a prospectus. That was quite enough for him. He sat down quickly at a writing-table and wrote a prospectus—his skill was prodigious in this line of composition—in which he proved conclusively that the Compañia Limitada de Ferrocarriles de la Ciudad de Tarazona y sus

Alrededores was the most promising financial enterprise in which the investing public ever had been permitted to purchase the few remaining shares.

But pleased though the Colonel naturally was at having thus struck what had every appearance of being a pay streak of phenomenal thickness and width, he was not a little disheartened, as time went on without materially advancing the Tarazona tramway enterprise, by the conviction that the ore was of an eminently refractory type. So far as projection was concerned, the Marques was all that the most sanguine promoter could ask; but in the matter of coming down to the hard-pan, to use the Colonel's phrase, he left a good deal to be desired. Under other and more favorable conditions the Colonel's vigorous method would have been to get his scheme into tangible shape by the organization of a company, which he then would have asked the Marques to join as chairman; and by the printing of some thousands of certificates of shares, a considerable portion of which he would have "placed" with his friends, and the remaining more considerable portion of which he would have asked the Marques to purchase. Then he would have strewn the prospectus broadcast throughout the land. If it took, and there was a demand for the stock—well, then the Colonel and his friends would see that the demand was supplied, even at the sacrifice of their own holdings. Should they be compelled by a high sense of duty to make a sacrifice of that nature, they would then, of course, retire from the management. Having

enabled it to win its way to popular favor, they would permit the Compañia Limitada de Ferrocarriles de la Ciudad de Tarazona y sus Alrededores to go it alone.

Under the existing highly unfavorable conditions this masterly line of action could not be pursued. Those who had been the friends of his bosom, before the Nicaragua catastrophe, standing ready to help in the organization of anything, and willing to permit any number of shares to stand in their names, now would have none of him. Their disposition was wholly that of priests and Levites. They declined with maledictions to act as directors. They declared in the most profanely positive terms that they would not lend him a solitary imprecated cent. Yet without some slight advance of ready money—his own scant savings from the Nicaragua wreck being about expended—he could do nothing. His prospectus must be printed, and so must his share certificates—and even the most sanguine of the bank-note companies declined to execute his order save on a basis of fifty per cent. deposited in advance.

The only line of action that appeared to be open to him in the premises was to induce the Marques to come down with the trifling amount demanded by the bank-note company, and to permit the use of his name as chairman of the yet-to-be-organized board. With that much of a start, the Colonel's hopeful nature led him to believe that he could scare up a board of direction somehow; and, if he could not, he was prepared to fill in the gap temporarily

with a list of names copied from the nearest tombstones. But when this modest plan—not including, however, a statement of the source whence the names of his fellow-directors might be drawn—was formulated and presented, the Marques toyed with it in a manner that provoked Colonel Withersby to violent profanity in private, and that seemed more than likely to end by driving him mad. One day he would manifest every disposition to fall in with the Colonel's proposals, and the very next day he would treat the whole matter as though it had been at that moment opened to him for the first time. That he continued to accept the various entertainments, with their accompanying refreshments, which the Colonel offered him, only made the situation the more trying. Having been begun, these hospitalities could not well be abandoned. But it was entirely obvious to the Colonel that they could not go on much longer unless he could succeed in making some sort of a strike. As he put it, in the mining phraseology that was habitual with him, the dumps were cleaned up, there was nothing but wall in sight, and he had either to open a new prospect or go flat on his back on the bed-rock. Truly, by this time, the hole that he was in was a desperately deep one, and he was at the very bottom of it. With all his vigor, and in the matter of cursing he had a great deal of vigor, he cursed the hour in which the Marques de Valdeflores had come out of Spain.

Being in this bitter mood, Colonel Withersby turned to Monsieur Duvent and Mrs. Mortimer—whose disposition toward the Marques he shrewdly

inferred was quite as bitter as his own—with a request for aid in realizing a little plan by which their several sacrifices of cash upon the altar of a singularly barren friendship certainly would be restored to them; and even might be restored to them as much as fourfold.

In presenting his plan to his friends Colonel Withersby's supporting argument was statesmanlike. If the Marques were a genuine Marques, he said, and as rich as he professed himself to be, the loss of five hundred dollars, or even of five thousand dollars, could make no possible difference to him. If, on the other hand, he were a bogus Marques, and his wealth also a sham, no harm could come from shearing him in so far as he could be shorn, and thereafter turning him adrift to run away with the flock of black lambs to which, as then would be demonstrated, he properly belonged. Indeed, so far from harm coming of this preliminary snipping, it would yield the valuable result of proving beyond a peradventure the quality of the fleece; and so would determine whether or not his, the Colonel's, time and talents could be employed to advantage in endeavoring to effect the more radical shearing that would remove every vestige of merchantable wool. In brief, the Colonel's plan, the logical conclusion from these premises, was that they should relieve the Marques of a few of his Spanish dollars in the course of a quiet evening at play.

Argument of this able sort, especially when addressed to persons already more than disposed to fall in with its conclusions, was convincing. Mrs. Mortimer, it is true—she was a cautious person,

who played slowly and prudently the interesting games in which she was engaged—did hesitate a little, but presently said with an agreeable cordiality that the Colonel had done her many good turns in the past, and that she gladly would do him a good turn now by assisting to the best of her ability in making his plan a working success. Probably there was a great store of womanly tenderness and self-sacrifice in Mrs. Mortimer's nature. Indeed, the accumulation of those gentle qualities must have been very considerable, for she rarely made any use of them.

Monsieur Duvent did not hesitate at all. The chance of getting a shot direct at the Marques delighted him. Unhampered by the arbitrary and annoying regulations of a banking system that he despised but could not defy, he felt a comfortable conviction that he could balance, even to the extent of tipping it decidedly in the other direction, the account that stood so heavily against him. He therefore willingly promised to provide the five hundred dollars of visible capital that the occasion called for; and even consented to divide with Mrs. Mortimer—in the improbable event of failure to secure from the Marques at least this trifling amount—the cost of the little supper that would precede the more serious entertainment in which their Spanish friend would be requested to take part.

IV

By those privileged to enjoy them, as already has been intimated, the coziness of Mrs. Mortimer's

little suppers was justly esteemed. Usually they were limited to herself and a single guest; never were they suffered to exceed the sociable number of four. Mrs. Mortimer's tastes were not precisely simple; but she was of a shy, retiring nature, and she detested a crowd.

On the present occasion it was pleasant to behold —had there been anybody to behold it—the warm cordiality that was developed between these four agreeable people as this charming little supper moved smoothly along from the cocktails which began it (cocktails before supper had the merit of novelty to the Marques; he took to them most kindly) to the coffee that brought it to an end. Mrs. Mortimer's fine social qualities enabled her to make each one of her guests appear at his very best, and also to appreciate at its full value his own appearance. She was well acquainted with Colonel Withersby's best stories, and she skilfully led up to them; she understood Monsieur Duvent's professional disposition toward taciturnity, and covered it so admirably as to give the impression that he was positively loquacious; when the conversation showed the least tendency toward flagging, she herself was as prompt to fill the impending pause with sparkling anecdote as in its more lively periods she was ready still farther to stimulate it by sprightly repartee. Being conducted in the French and Spanish tongues—the Marques did not speak English—the talk naturally followed the genius of these languages, and was possibly a trifle freer than it would have been had English been employed as the medium for the inter-

change of thought. As the evening advanced, this liberal tendency became somewhat more marked.

It was, however, in her demeanor toward the Marques that Mrs. Mortimer's admirable qualities as a hostess most brilliantly were displayed. Her gracious friendliness was manifested by a hand frankly placed upon his shoulder as she bent over him to offer coffee (her merry conceit being to serve this beverage herself); by exchanging glasses with him when she drank his health; by her use of her prodigiously handsome brown eyes—and in a hundred other artless and pretty ways. As to her cleverness in creating conversational situations that enabled him to say bright things, it really was astonishing. As has been stated, the disposition of the Marques at all times was friendly; under these exceptionally agreeable conditions he became positively effusive. Yet, though his manner really was frankness itself, Mrs. Mortimer's fine perception suggested to her mind the troubling doubt that perhaps his effusiveness in some small part was assumed. Possibly a similar thought was entertained by Monsieur Duvent—but in the case of Monsieur Duvent the fact must be remembered that his professional experience had begotten in him what might be termed an almost morbid suspicion of his kind.

Until the middle of the feast was passed, Colonel Withersby also debated within himself whether or not the good feeling that the Marques so liberally manifested was wholly genuine. After that period —his own generous nature being then warmed and stimulated by the very considerable quantities of

the excellent food and drink which had become a part of it—he dismissed all such evil suspicions from his manly breast as being alike unworthy of himself and of his noble friend. The Marques, as he declared heartily in his thought, was as straight as a string, and a jolly good fellow all the way through. It was a peculiarity of Colonel Withersby's temperament—a peculiarity that on more than one occasion had betrayed his substantial interests—that his usually keen and severe judgment of men and things was subject to serious derangement by an access of what may be termed vinous benevolence. Mrs. Mortimer and Monsieur Duvent, being among the most intimate of the Colonel's friends, were well acquainted with this genial failing in his lofty character; and, because of their knowledge of it, they viewed with an increasing alarm his increasing disposition to make the spirit of the occasion so largely a part of himself. They were sustained, however, by the comforting knowledge—bred of an extended acquaintance with his methods—that even when the Colonel had associated an extraordinary quantity of extraneous spirits with his own, he still could play a phenomenally good game of cards.

Without thought of the anxiety that his cheerful conviviality was occasioning his friends, the Colonel rattled away in his most lively manner, and manifested toward the Marques a constantly increasing cordiality. Indeed, by the time that they had reached the coffee and cigars (Mrs. Mortimer was considerate enough to permit the gentlemen to smoke) his disposition was to vow eternal friendship

with the Marques, and to seal his vow, in the Spanish fashion, with a fraternal embrace. But in despite of this tendency of his affectionate nature toward overflow, the confidence of his friends in his sound judgment remaining unimpaired in the midst of its alcoholic environment was not misplaced. His heart, it is true, was mellowed almost to melting; but it also is true that his head remained admirably cool. Sentiment, with the Colonel, was one thing; business was another. His warm fraternal feeling for the Marques did not for one moment interfere with his fixed intention to work him, as he somewhat coarsely had expressed it, for all that he was worth.

It was with this utilitarian purpose full in view that the Colonel suggested—the pleasures of eating being ended but the pleasures of drinking and smoking still continuing—that they should end their agreeable evening with a quiet game of cards. Being gentlemen of the world, the Marques and Monsieur Duvent readily fell in with this proposal. Mrs. Mortimer, it is true—although undoubtedly a lady of the world—entered a gentle remonstrance against so engrossing a form of amusement: on the ground that it would check the flow of brilliant conversation, and also, as she playfully added, would deprive her of the undivided attention which was her due. The gentlemen, however, explained that as the game would be played merely as a pastime, and for insignificant stakes, it would not in the smallest degree interfere with conversation; and they vowed and protested that under no circumstances could they fail to pay their tribute of homage to

Mrs. Mortimer's charms. In view of this explanation, and of the gallant declaration that accompanied it, the lady was pleased to withdraw her objections, and even to consent to take part in the game. But she was a very stupid player, she said; and she expressed much good-humored regret for whoever should be unlucky enough to be her partner —she was *so* careless, she protested, and did make such perfectly horrid mistakes!

There was a trifling delay in beginning the game, due to Mrs. Mortimer's professed inability to find the cards with which to play it. She was perfectly sure, she said, that somewhere about her apartment there was a little bundle containing half a dozen new packs; they had been given to her quite recently by one of her friends; where she had put them she could not remember at all. Her memory was so outrageously bad, she added, while continuing her search, that her life was made a veritable burden to her. Truly, Mrs. Mortimer's memory could not have been a very good one, for the package had been presented to her—the amiable anonymous friend to whom she owed it being, in point of fact, Colonel Withersby—at a period no more remote than that very afternoon; yet a good ten minutes passed before she could remember that she had placed it in a drawer of her escritoire upon receiving it from the Colonel's hands.

She laughed merrily over her own stupidity when at last the missing package was found; and she laughed still more when, having cut for partners, what she gaily referred to as the dreadfully bad luck

of the Marques made them allies against Colonel Withersby and Monsieur Duvent. Their defeat, she declared, was a foregone conclusion; it really was too bad! The Marques, for his part, vowed that he was so indifferent a player that he would be grateful to her for the mistakes which would keep his own lapses in countenance; and politely added that defeat in her company would give him a pleasure far superior to that conferred by a victory in which she had no share. In the matter of making handsome speeches the Marques de Valdeflores was not easily to be outdone.

Yet, in despite of Mrs. Mortimer's bad play—concerning which, politeness aside, there could be no question—and in despite of the far from brilliant play of her partner, the game for some little time went decidedly in their favor. This was in part accounted for by the fact that the hands which they held were phenomenally good, while the hands held by their adversaries were correspondingly bad. So marked was the run of luck in their favor—being most marked, indeed, when the deal lay with Colonel Withersby or Monsieur Duvent—that the Colonel swore, in his bluff, hearty way, that the devil himself was in the pack, and was manipulating it for the express purpose of punishing him, the Colonel, for his sins; at which humorous sally there was a general laugh.

However, at the end of an hour—by which time rather more than half of the capital provided for the occasion by Monsieur Duvent was arranged before Mrs. Mortimer in a gay little pile—the Colonel said

quite seriously that the luck of the pack certainly was against him, and begged that it might be changed. There was a smile, of course, at the Colonel's superstition; but the Marques promptly conceded the favor requested, and induced Mrs. Mortimer also to grant it: which was not an easy matter, for she declared that she needed all that good luck could do for her in order to hold her own.

The event really seemed to justify the Colonel's superstitious fancy, for with the very first deal of the new pack—he dealt it himself—the luck entirely changed. In view of this fact, of the agreement that the stakes should be increased so that the losers might have a better chance to recoup, and of the marked increase in the number of Mrs. Mortimer's mistakes, it will be perceived that there were several excellent reasons why the handsome accumulation of gold in front of Mrs. Mortimer should go even more quickly than it had come. But, oddly enough, it did not go. The play of the Marques was made in the same negligent manner that it had been made from the start; but Monsieur Duvent observed—not without a touch of that admiration which every professional, even though unwillingly, concedes to professional skill—that its quality had entirely changed. It was not brilliant, but it was cautious, firm, and extraordinarily sure. When he dealt, his own hand was as strikingly good as it was strikingly bad when the deal lay with the Colonel or with Monsieur Duvent; Mrs. Mortimer's mistakes—they were very numerous—were handsomely covered, and even sometimes were turned to ad-

vantage; his conduct of the game, in short, was masterly—and the gay little pile in front of his partner, so far from diminishing, steadily increased. Monsieur Duvent shot an inquiring glance from under his bushy gray eyebrows across the table at the Colonel. As understood by that gentleman it meant: "Who have we got here, anyway?" The Colonel's answering glance was intended to convey his strong conviction that—to paraphrase euphemistically his thought—the cloven hoof of their adversary was invisible only because it was covered with a neatly made patent-leather boot. At the end of the second hour the entire capital provided by Monsieur Duvent had changed hands.

At this stage of proceedings Monsieur Duvent and the Colonel, taking advantage of an interruption in the game caused by the serving of fresh coffee, held a short conference. Monsieur Duvent expressed decidedly the opinion that they had better stop. The Marques, if he were a Marques, evidently knew more than they did. The part of prudence was to make the best of a bad bargain and to drop him then and there. But the Colonel, whose fighting spirit was thoroughly aroused, would not for a moment consent to such ignominious surrender. He insisted that Monsieur Duvent should provide another five hundred—merely for a show, he said—and that the game should go on. By sheer force of will—the Colonel was a most resolute person—he succeeded in carrying his point. Sorely, against his better judgment, but still yielding, Monsieur Duvent produced from a reserved fund in his

private chamber the sum required; whereupon, the coffee being finished, the game went on. But it went on so disastrously that at the end of another hour the fresh supply of capital was exhausted—and Monsieur Duvent's thousand was arranged in front of Mrs. Mortimer in ten neat little piles. Gratifying though it was on abstract grounds to perceive his own wisdom thus triumph over the Colonel's fatuous folly, there was such substantial cause for annoyance in the situation that Monsieur Duvent found no enjoyment in it. *Mieux vaut un sage ennemi qu'un sot ami,* was the thought that just then occurred to him—with the unpleasing corollary reflection that at that precise juncture he had them both. With a smile that lacked a little in spontaneity he suggested that they now had played long enough.

In this temperate proposition, with excellent good-breeding, the Marques at once concurred. But the Colonel—having continued as the night wore on to expand his spirits factitiously—would not listen to it at all. He was for fighting as long as any sort of a shot remained in the locker. He advanced this view with emphasis; and suggested that in lieu of cash the Marques should receive—should his very extraordinary luck continue—his, the Colonel's, written promises of payment, to be redeemed on the ensuing day. Monsieur Duvent, of course, could not reasonably object to going on when capital of this possibly attenuated nature was employed; and the Marques accepted the proposal with a polite alacrity that quite touched the Colonel's heart.

On the promissory basis thus established, but with the luck steadily against the Colonel and his partner, the game was continued until four o'clock in the morning. When that hour arrived the Marques announced placidly that, inasmuch as he was habitually an early riser, it really was time for him to go to bed. He had greatly enjoyed his evening, he said; it was one of the most agreeable and amusing evenings, in fact, that he had ever passed. In handsome terms he smilingly congratulated Mrs. Mortimer upon the good luck that had attended her bad play, and insisted that two-thirds of their joint winnings should be hers. Nothing could be more liberal than this arrangement. In pursuance of it he turned over to her the two thousand dollars represented by Colonel Withersby's paper, and slipped the thousand dollars in gold into his own pocket as his own modest share. Then he shook hands heartily with the gentlemen; gallantly kissed the tips of Mrs. Mortimer's white fingers; and bidding the company a most cordial good-night, left the room. As the door closed behind him there was a moment of silence; and then the Colonel—in what, perhaps, was luridly accurate minor prophecy—accurately expressed the sense of the meeting in the terse observation: "Well, I'll be—!"

V

In the early afternoon of the day that had begun for them so disastrously, a little council of war was held by the vanquished in Mrs. Mortimer's apart-

ment. In a general way, the council was swayed by a common motive; but its several members contemplated this motive through the media of widely differing moods.

Mrs. Mortimer, sitting with her back to the carefully adjusted light, apparently was none the worse for her late hours; and she was by no means cast down by the defeat that she had witnessed but in which she had not precisely shared. Her net loss, after all, was only half the cost of the little supper; and she was not by any means certain that this loss was absolute—rather was she inclined to look upon it in the light of an investment. Marques or no Marques, the Spanish gentleman had commended himself heartily to her good graces by his obviously masterful qualities in the acquisition of property. Mrs. Mortimer had seen too much of the world to be dazzled by a title; that which inspired her respect and won her esteem was substantial wealth—and her liberal spirit held her high above all petty and trivial objections to the manner in which the wealth was acquired. That it actually existed was quite enough for her. She was absolutely indifferent, therefore, as to whether the Marques de Valdeflores possessed large hereditary estates in Spain or large hereditary skill in playing games of so-called chance. In either case the result practically was the same: he was a man of substance with whom the most friendly relations eminently were to be desired. She had observed also with pleasure that his caution was equal to his skill. Although herself the sufferer by it, she had commended him rather than blamed him for

his intelligent division of their joint winnings. On the face of it, that division had been characterized by a magnificent generosity; but no one knew better than she did that the generosity was more apparent than real. Before retiring, she had used twelve hundred dollars' worth of Colonel Withersby's paper in crimping her hair, and carelessly had thrown the remainder of his insecurities into her waste-paper basket. Some disagreeable reflections, it is true, had attended her prodigal use of the impotentiality of wealth that the Marques had lavished upon her; but, at the same time, she had been unable to withhold her profound respect for the delicate adroitness that his conduct of this transaction had displayed. His method had nothing coarse about it. It was not bludgeon work; it was the effective finesse of the rapier. Mrs. Mortimer was not a bad hand, in a lady-like way, at rapier practice herself. She felt that could she but ally herself with such a past master of the art as the Marques had proved himself to be, her future would be assured. She came to the council, therefore, in the spirit of doves and olive branches, with every fibre of her tender being prepared to thrill responsive to the soft phrase of peace. Her proposition was, the Marques having proved himself to be a good deal more than a match for them, that they should cease to regard him as an enemy, and should frankly invite him to be their associate and friend.

In opposition to these peaceful views of Mrs. Mortimer's, Colonel Withersby—coming to the coun-

cil with the vigor and in the temper of a giant refreshed with cocktails—was all for war. The Colonel's pride was wounded; his finer sensibilities were hurt. The very qualities which Mrs. Mortimer most admired in the Marques—his delicate method, his refined skill, his perfect *savoir-faire*—were precisely the qualities which the Colonel most strongly resented. It was cruelly galling to his self-respect to be conquered with weapons which he perceived were infinitely superior to his own, and which he also perceived were hopelessly beyond his power to use. In the course of his rather remarkably variegated career, Colonel Withersby repeatedly had received what he was wont to describe, in his richly figurative language, as black eyes; but he always had had at least the poor satisfaction of knowing how and why the darkening of his orbs of vision had been achieved. In this case, however, he did not know how, still less why, his adversary had triumphed over him. Certainly Monsieur Duvent had made no mistakes; save in the matter of unwisely prolonging the play, he himself had made no mistakes; and Mrs. Mortimer, to do her justice, had made all the mistakes expected of her and even a few to spare. Rarely had three intelligent persons contrived a more effective programme; rarely had such a programme been more exactly carried out. Humanly and logically, its results should have been honorable victory attended by substantial spoils. Yet its diabolical and illogical result actually was humiliating disaster attended by substantial loss. Being at the best of times but a heathen, it is not sur-

prising that in these trying circumstances Colonel Withersby raged; nor that, raging, he cast his voice for war.

Monsieur Duvent, whose temperament was conservative, rejected the Colonel's truculent suggestions and ranged himself with Mrs. Mortimer on the side of a profitable peace. Their Spanish friend, he declared, speaking out of the wealth of his experience of the world, evidently was not a Marques; he was one of themselves. It was generally conceded, he continued, that dog ought not to eat dog (Monsieur Duvent expressed this concept, of course, in its French equivalent: *les loups ne se mangent pas entre eux*); and it was universally admitted that when a feast of this unnatural sort took place only the dog who did the eating got any real good from it. They themselves, he pointed out—especially he himself, since his was the capital that the Marques had absorbed—occupied the position of the other dog, the eaten one. Obviously that position was as unprofitable as it was humiliating. Consequently, he concluded, their rational course in the premises was that which Mrs. Mortimer had indicated: to seek an alliance with this most accomplished person —which should be continued, at least, until they had mastered the secrets of his superior skill. When they knew as much as he did, said Monsieur Duvent, they could throw him over and have done with him; just at present he knew a great deal more than they did, and it was largely to their interest to make him their friend. There was no false pride about Monsieur Duvent. His thirst for professional knowl-

edge was inexhaustible, and he was eager at all times to slake it at any source.

Colonel Withersby was not pleased to find himself so conspicuously in a minority; and he was open, not to say violent, in expressing his displeasure. His was a bold, aggressive nature—and the cocktails wherewith he had refreshed himself had not tended to take any of the fighting spirit out of him. Had he not occupied the trying position of a dependent—for without the assistance of his friends he would lack sinews for his intended war—he would have been abusive. Under the existing conditions he was argumentative. The Spaniard, he admitted, certainly knew a great deal about cards; in that line of gentlemanly amusement, no doubt, it would be well to avoid any farther trial of conclusions with him. But when it came to dice, the case was different. In throwing dice, the Colonel declared with a sincere immodesty, he had yet to meet the man who could get ahead of him. Let him but have a square chance to settle matters on that basis with the Marques and all would yet be well. The others, if they did not want to, need not appear in the matter at all. If they would but set him up with a beggarly hundred—merely enough to make a show with—he would ask no more of them. Being thus started, he would go ahead and win the victory alone. And finally, with the most convincing self-imprecations if he didn't, the Colonel protested that he would divide on the square.

Monsieur Duvent stroked doubtfully his respectable gray mustache. On the one hand he had great

confidence in the Colonel's skill in the manipulation of dice. On the other hand his estimate of the skill of the Marques in all directions was very high. It was altogether probable, he thought, that a man who evidently had made so profound a study of the scientific possibilities of pasteboard had pressed his researches not less deeply into the scientific possibilities of ivory. If he had, then would the Colonel be but as wax in his hands. Therefore Monsieur Duvent hesitated; and with each moment of his hesitation his disposition tended the more strongly to take the ground that he declined to throw good money after bad.

Fortunately for Colonel Withersby, the tender nature of Mrs. Mortimer had not been appealed to in vain. As she herself had said, the Colonel had done her many good turns in the past; and she saw no reason for doubting that he might do her many more good turns in the future—which latter consideration may have been remotely the cause of the flood of kindly intention that now welled up within her breast. She was a pronounced free-trader, and her knowledge of the world assured her that reciprocity could not always be only on one side. Had the Colonel asked her to join him openly in carrying on his campaign against the Marques, she certainly would have refused his request. That would have been asking too much. But the Colonel's proposal to fight his battle alone—and to divide the spoils in case he should be victorious—put the matter on a basis that enabled her to give free play to the generous dictates of her heart. She therefore added her

entreaties to his appeal to Monsieur Duvent for assistance; and even went so far as to offer to join equally with that gentleman in providing the small amount of capital without which the little venture in ivory could not be launched.

Whether or not this liberal offer would have sufficed to overcome Monsieur Duvent's parsimonious hesitancy, never will be known. At the very moment that he opened his mouth to speak the words which no doubt would have been decisive, there was a knock at the door; then a servant entered bearing a great bunch of magnificent roses—all of which, however, being very full blown, were somewhat past their prime. An envelope directed to Mrs. Mortimer was attached to this handsome yet slightly equivocal floral tribute. Within the envelope was the card of the Marques de Valdeflores, on which was pencilled the request that she would accept the accompanying trifling souvenir of the very agreeable evening that he had passed in her company and in the company of her friends. In the right hand bottom corner of the card were added the letters: P. P. C. In many ways Mrs. Mortimer was not a perfect woman, but among her imperfections was not that of stupidity. As she looked at this bunch of too-full-blown roses, and realized the message that it was intended delicately to convey, the dove-like and olive-branching sentiments departed from her breast—and in their place came sentiments compounded of daggers and bow-strings and very poisonous bowls!

As for Colonel Withersby, having but glanced at

the fateful letters on the card that Mrs. Mortimer mutely handed him, he descended to the office of the Casa Napoléon in little more than a single bound. In little more than two bounds he returned to the first floor. Consternation was written upon his expressive face, and also rage. In a sentence that was nothing short of blistering in its intensity he announced the ruinous fact that the Marques de Valdeflores had sailed at six o'clock that morning on the French steamer, and at that moment must be at least two hundred miles out at sea!

VI

Dr. Théophile had but little to say when Madame told him with triumphal sorrow that the Marques de Valdeflores had paid his bill in full and had departed for his native Spain. Madame's mixture of sentiments was natural. Her triumph was because her estimate of the financial integrity of the Marques had been justified by the event; her sorrow was because so profitable a patron was gone from the Casa Napoléon. The few words which Dr. Théophile spoke, in his softened French of Guadeloupe, were to the effect that a man was not necessarily a Marques because he happened to pay his bill at a hotel. Madame resented this answer hotly. It was more, she said, than ungenerous; it was heartlessly unjust. She challenged Dr. Théophile to disprove by any evidence save his own miserable suspicions that the Marques was not a

Marques; she defied him to do his worst! Dr. Théophile said mildly that he really could not afford the time requisite for abstract research of this nature, and added that he had no worst to do. Madame declared that his reply was inconclusive; an obvious endeavor to evade the question that he himself had raised. Dr. Théophile smiled pleasantly and answered that, as usual, she was quite right.

Had Madame only known it, she might have called Colonel Withersby as a witness in her behalf; for the Colonel, had he been willing to testify, could have made her triumph over Dr. Théophile complete. Being curious to get down to what he termed the hard-pan in regard to the Marques, he had made an expedition of inquiry to the Spanish consulate on the very day that that nobleman had sailed away.

Certainly, said the polite young man who answered his pointed question, the Marques de Valdeflores had been in New York for nearly a month. His visit had been one of business—to arrange with a firm of American contractors for the building of a tramway in the city of Tarazona. He had completed his business satisfactorily and had returned to Spain.

The Colonel's usually ruddy face whitened a little as he listened to this statement. The tramway project really, then, had been a substantial one after all! This was bitter indeed. But perhaps it was not true; the young man might be only chaffing him. His voice was hoarse, and there was a perceptible break in it as he said: "Honest Injun, now. You're giving it to me straight?"

The young man looked puzzled. He was by no

means familiar with the intricacies of the English language, and his mental translation of these words into literal Spanish did not yield a very intelligible result.

Perceiving the confusion that was caused by his use of a too extreme form of his own vernacular, the Colonel repeated his question in substance in the Spanish tongue: "Of a truth he is a Marques, and rich? There is no mistake?"

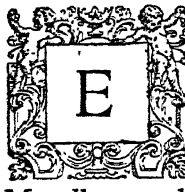
The young man perceptibly brightened. "Oh, of a truth there is no mistake, señor," he answered. "He is a Marques, and enormously rich. To see him you would not think so, perhaps, for his habits are very simple, and he is as modest in his manner as in his dress. You see, he has given much of his time to business matters; and he has travelled a great deal."

Colonel Withersby withdrew from the consulate. His desire for information was more than satisfied; it was satiated. In the relative privacy of the passageway, outside the consulate door, his pent-up feelings found vent.

"Travelled, has he?" ejaculated the Colonel, with a series of accessory ejaculations of such force that the air immediately around him became perceptibly blue. "Travelled! Well, I should say he had! I've travelled a little myself, but I'll be"—again the Colonel here dropped into minor prophecy—"if he hasn't gone two miles to my one every time!"

COLONEL WITHERSBY'S "STRIKE"

I



ITHER professionally as a promoter, or personally as an individual, Colonel Withersby's claim upon the disrespect of his extensive circle of acquaintance not only was unquestionable but was unquestioned. Morally speaking—a form of address with which the Colonel himself had nothing in common, being one of the less conspicuous but most exemplary immoralists of his time—he was so maculate that he fairly was spotted all over with the stains of the transactions of various densities of shade in which at one time or another he had been engaged. But yet, his nature being of the genial sort that found expression in a cordial willingness to set up drinks for the party whenever he happened to be in company and also in funds, he was warmly esteemed by the little flock of lost sheep with which he habitually pastured at the Casa Napoléon. And on his side the Colonel had a feeling of thorough good fellowship with these his pastoral associates—

for he had been a lost sheep himself under many widely varied conditions and in many widely sundered lands.

At the period here under consideration Colonel Withersby's fortunes, as a mining person would phrase it, were "pinching out"; that is to say, one of his seasons of prosperity was drawing to an end. As was usual in his case, this particular season of prosperity had taken its rise in a spirited adventure in promotion that had turned out—for the promoter—very well indeed.

In placing upon the New York stock-market the shares of The International Tramways Company (limited) of New York and Bogotá the Colonel had been actuated, as usual, by the highest motives. As he stated in his prospectus, the subscribers to this undertaking not only would receive in money a very large return upon their investment (an assertion supported by arithmetical demonstration) but would enjoy the higher satisfaction of having assisted in diffusing in a sister republic those civilizing influences which flow from the introduction of improved means of transportation into any land.

Actually, this beneficent project had not been realized. But that absolute success had not crowned the Colonel's philanthropic efforts—in other words, that not a single foot of tramway had been laid in Bogotá—was due rather to the unfortunate geographical situation of the Colombian capital than to failure on his part to push the undertaking vigorously by marketing its shares. Indeed, if any error at all was to be charged against him in the prem-

ises it was the very venial error of that brave hopefulness which outruns strict discretion in its endeavor to accomplish broadly beneficent results. A man of colder reason might have perceived before the shares were sold—not to say before the Company was organized—that serious difficulties would attend the construction of a tramway in a city lying nearly nine thousand feet above the sea-level and accessible only by mountain trails. But in contemplating the substantial advantages which would result from the realization of his project the Colonel's sanguine soul altogether ignored this trifling preliminary detail. Indeed, by the time that the taking-in of material came to be considered by the Board of Direction he had ceased to be a member of that body; and even—having closed out his holding of founder's shares at a handsome figure—had ceased to have any moneyed or other interest in the Company. For the mission in life of this large-souled philanthropist was to take only the initiative in enterprises of a broad usefulness—leaving to minds of a smaller calibre the dull details of executing his projects; or, as sometimes happened, of getting out of them or of going down with them when some overlooked trifle (as in this instance) made their execution unfortunately impossible.

Yet while eminently disastrous to the ultimate holders of the Company's insecurities, the result of the Bogotá venture so far as the Colonel was concerned was a brilliant financial success. He had charged against the Company, and had collected when it was floated, the expenses of promotion;

he had sold at a handsome figure, as has been stated, his founder's shares. As the whole of his outlay thus was returned to him, and as his shares had cost him nothing—being received in exchange for his transfer to the Company of the concession which he had secured personally from the Colombian Government—his profit from the transaction was both large and clear. In point of fact when, as he expressed it, he "cleaned up the dump"—that is to say, when he realized upon his holdings and closed his connection with the International Tramways Company (limited) of New York and Bogotá—he was in a position of easy affluence that made him careless of immediate consequences and indifferent to the assaults of fate.

"It's been the best thing I ever struck," said the Colonel cheerily to Mrs. Mortimer. "It's been pay-gravel from first to last, and I've corralled enough out of it to keep the wolf from the door for the next ten years!" And as he spoke these buoyant words he brought his hand down with a sounding smack upon his trousers pocket and called to Telésforo to bring two more cocktails. It was late in the afternoon, and the Colonel hospitably was offering refreshments to Mrs. Mortimer in the Casa restaurant—of which, at that hour, they were the only occupants.

"As things are looking just now," he continued, putting down his glass empty and dropping into educational and astronomical metaphor with a gayety that told of a happy heart, "school may keep or not, just as it pleases; and I don't care a

d—n for the spots on the sun! Here, you black nigger—set 'em up again." And so generous was the Colonel's mood that Mrs. Mortimer's refusal to partake of the third brace of cocktails aroused in him feelings of regret which only partially were allayed, when the cocktails came, by his drinking them both himself.

Sanguine though were his expectations in regard to keeping the wolf from his door, quite possibly they might have been realized had the wolf been his only enemy in the animal kingdom. Unfortunately, such was not the case; and in setting so remote a limit upon the continuance of his prosperity he had not taken into account the possible doings of the tiger—with which ferocious creature, under the mistaken impression that he was its master, he had maintained injudiciously close relations for many years. Within narrow limits, his belief in his masterful attitude toward the tiger was well founded. When wholly sober, Colonel Withersby was one of the most competent manipulators of either pasteboard or ivory of his country and age; so competent, indeed, that within what may be termed his temperate zone he was an almost certain winner at any game of so-called chance. But unfortunately—it was one of the venial weaknesses of his genially expansive nature—his sobriety was eminently discontinuous, and when adrift in his tropical latitudes of partial or complete intoxication his skill went from him and he was as wax in even a mere tyro's hands. From which conditions it resulted that while at the outset of his hazards

against Fortune he usually was seated upon the tiger's back with a confident smile, at the end of such ventures he almost invariably was inside the tiger—and the smile was on the face of that sagacious but unfaithful animal. And so it came to pass that at the end not of ten years but of ten months—during which time, to quote his own language, he had "bucked the tiger" with a most lamentable persistency—he had parted with so considerable a part of his Bogotá winnings that the howls of the approaching wolf sounded with a dismal clearness in his ears.

"What I've got to do," said the Colonel to himself, recognizing the stringency of the impending situation and rising to it with a manly heroism, "is to hustle around and make a fresh strike. But I must say," he added mournfully, with a reproachful glance at the empty glass in which had been the last of a series of inebriating but cheerless cocktails, " I think it's a blank shame that I've got to take to hustling again so soon!"

II

No one enjoyed more thoroughly than did Colonel Withersby the agreeable misuse of a season of ungentlemanly leisure; but, on the other hand, when he set himself to hustling he hustled. Having decided, in the case here under consideration, that energetic action was necessary, he promptly made his decision operative—and presently his friend Mrs.

Mortimer was apprised, indirectly, that he had on hand a new venture of a speculative character by his request that she would lend the use of her apartment for, and herself would preside at, a little supper that he wished to give to Mr. George A. Wybird, of Santa Fé; a gentleman with whom, he explained, he was interested in the development of a mine.

Mrs. Mortimer was accustomed to receiving from the Colonel requests of this nature, and her habit was to grant them with alacrity—experience having taught her that in gracing his cordial social gatherings with the charm of her presence she rarely failed to receive, either immediately or ultimately, as much pleasure as she gave. In fact, aside from the cheer to be derived from his own buoyant society, the Colonel's little parties were apt to open for her the way to opportunities which her own complaisant and genial temperament enabled her substantially to improve. For the Colonel, being a sound political economist, faced squarely in small matters—with a view to its eventual evasion in large ones—the law that something cannot be had for nothing; and, therefore, in the preliminary stages of his various enterprises he always made a point of dividing handsomely with those who lent him a helping hand. Nor was he indisposed to assist, in his turn, any little profitable side-issues which his helpful friends might develop in their own personal interests from his broadly philanthropic schemes. Indeed, he had repeatedly placed Mrs. Mortimer in a position to work with him, but from a different facing, pay-streaks of an exceptional richness; most notably,

perhaps, in the case of the charming acquaintance which she had formed under his auspices with the Colombian Minister during the negotiation for the concession—that she was largely helpful in obtaining —for the tramways company in Bogotá.

Having in mind the several benefits conferred upon her in the past, and also having a nature most amiably pliable, this obliging lady did not demand any exhaustive exposition of Mr. Wybird's social standing, in Santa Fé or elsewhere, before expressing her willingness to be a partaker with him of the Colonel's hospitality. But the Colonel himself, with a nice sense of the proprieties of the situation, volunteered the information for which she was too polite to ask.

"Wybird comes from New Mexico," he explained, "and he's been roughing it out there for a good while, and of course he's pretty wild and woolly. But, all the same, he's a high-toned gentleman from his hat to his boots. He takes care of himself, Wybird does, and you needn't worry about him at supper. He'll only get sociably drunk. He says that in ladies' society that's as far as he ever goes. You see, for all his wildness and woolliness, he slings a certain amount of style."

Probably some of the Colonel's acquaintances known to Mrs. Mortimer did not assay quite so high a percentage of stylish sobriety. Certainly there was a suggestion of relief in her tone as she answered: "Well, I'm glad he's that kind." And then, with an evidently genuine interest, she asked for information in regard to the mining venture in

which Colonel Withersby and Mr. Wybird were engaged.

"It's gold dollars. It's a dead sure thing from the word go," the Colonel answered confidently. "Of course I don't suppose," he continued with frankness, "the mine, as a mine, is worth a tinker's d—n. But it's a property to gamble on. Wybird has his story about it down so fine, and talks so dead in earnest, that at first I pretty near believed in it myself—and if he can make *me* see anything but a fake in The Laughing Girl I guess the shares ought to just walk out into the street and sell 'em-selves!

"It was Wybird struck out that name," the Colonel continued, "and it's a dandy. He's not woolly all over, Wybird isn't, and whoever picks him up for a chump is likely to wish he hadn't. What he don't know about practical mining—from grub-staking and claim-jumping smack along to setting up pumps and stamps—I guess isn't worth talking about; but when it comes to the business racket he owns he's as green as a cottonwood shoot and can't get along without me to show him how it's done. This is his first shot at trying to stock a mine East, and I have to put him up to every move in the game. He was all knocked out when I showed him how to work the incorporation—with our two boys here, the darkey Telésforo and Léon, and a straight-out bogus, to be incorporators with him and me. I wanted to put him in for President, but he was too modest. He said that was my berth, as I was to run things, and he'd try his hand at being

Secretary and Treasurer if I'd give him points as we went along. Yes, he's green; but his greenness won't do any harm—for to hear him going on about that mine you'd really think he thought the silver he talks about was there. He's simply immense in his talk. If I could only mail copies of him around for a prospectus we'd sell all the shares and get 'em at a premium inside of two days. You remember the Dry Butte Irrigation and Water Power Company, don't you?"

"The one that got you into trouble with the bank-note company about printing the shares?"

"Yes. When they wouldn't deliver the certificates until I'd paid for printing 'em—and they knew blank well I couldn't pay for 'em until I'd begun to sell 'em—and then tried to get the screws on me by raking up that old Vacuum Valve Company matter, and made things so hot that I had to skip out for Canada till I could settle. Well, there wasn't much in that irrigation scheme, for a fact. There wasn't any water worth speaking of to bring to Dry Butte, and there was only lava-beds to irrigate when you got it there; and the sawmill was a pure fake, for sage-brush and cottonwoods was all there was of timber within a hundred miles. But I do believe—and that's what made me think of it—if I'd had Wybird with me in that gamble we'd have made it go. He looks so plumb serious and truthful when he's talking to you he'd make you believe your arms was in the legs of your pants."

As it was obvious that the Colonel's concluding words could be addressed to Mrs. Mortimer only

in an impersonal and general sense, she made no comment upon them but reverted to the subject in chief.

"Is there anything, that is anything in particular, that you think may come out of the supper?" she asked.

"Well, it's only that maybe socially that way—with a little something to drink, the genial influence of lovely woman, and that sort of thing, you know—I can get Wybird off his high horse and down to the hard-pan. It's just blank nonsense his trying to come his all-on-the-square racket with me. We're in this thing together, and I want him to talk out and let me know where I'm to stand on the divide. But every time I try to get things settled he puts on his honest look and talks about my having a third of the shares, and makes out that I'm to hold 'em and take my pay out of what he calls 'the legitimate profits accruing from the mine.' It's baby-talk, that is. If I show him how to float his enterprise it's got to be fixed solid that we're to make an even divide of all we clear in cash. And what's more, I won't stand much more fooling about it. Either he's got to come to time short off, or I'll drop the whole business and try another deal. That's what this supper's for, and that's what he's got to do—so now you know how to play your hand." And the Colonel concluded his deliverance by imposing his personal malediction upon what he termed such baby-foolishness as third interests and legitimate profits; and emphasized his opinions by a brief commiseration service of exceeding scorn.

III

The suppers over which Colonel Withersby and Mrs. Mortimer jointly presided rarely failed to go blithely; and, as Mr. Wybird proved to be an agreeably gay companion, this particular supper rattled along with a fine show of cordial cheer. Moreover, according to the Colonel's thinking, it was so successful in a business way that at its conclusion he believed his strike to be as good as made.

In a lady-like fashion Mrs. Mortimer also found pleasure in the little festival; but hers was a cautious temperament, and her faith in the outcome of the business arrangements was a trifle less assured. The fact should be added, however, that adventitious circumstances contributed to induce this diversity of view. Colonel Withersby's own standards of sobriety, either in or out of ladies' society, were much less exigent than those which he had ascribed to his guest from Santa Fé; and because of his adherence to them he did not observe that Mr. Wybird came through the ordeal of the supper-party without attaining the condition of sociable intoxication which had been predicted for him—and which actually was attained, to state the case moderately, by the Colonel himself. But Mrs. Mortimer—who observed more clearly, because through a less vinous atmosphere—did perceive this phenomenon, and found it both interesting and ominous.

The plan for dealing with The Laughing Girl which Mr. Wybird had outlined amidst these mellowing

surroundings was such that Colonel Withersby—though himself accustomed to inventing boldly original methods for deriving profits from mining enterprises—was filled with admiration and surprise.

"You know, Withersby," he said with a friendly familiarity—it was at the second bird and third bottle stage of the supper, and the Colonel's generous nature was expanding with a large benevolence; "you know the ordinary racket in working a fake mine is just to boom it and then unload—get out a little before the smash with as much as you can grab."

"And it's not a bad way, either," put in the Colonel, "provided you can make it go." There was a ring of sincerity in his tone, as though—and such really was the case—he had had an extended acquaintance with this method both as a failure and as a success.

"But when," continued Mr. Wybird, "your mine isn't a fake, but a sure thing like The Laughing Girl, that isn't the best way."

Had Colonel Withersby been in a less benevolent mood this fresh insistence upon the substantial value of The Laughing Girl would have irritated him. As the case stood, however, he merely winked at Mr. Wybird; and broke into a gently gurgling chuckle as that gentleman winked back at him and continued:

"No sir, that's not the way to play the game when you've got a sure thing. The smash is all right, and we'll have a good one; but we won't do any unloading before it comes, and after it's over, and everything's

lying around flat on the ground, we'll buy in the stock at about two cents on the dollar and take a fresh start. Do you catch on?"

Obviously, the Colonel did not catch on. This fact was made evident by his expression of wrathful astonishment, and also was presented verbally in his terse (and possibly prophetic) statement of the lurid fate which, if he did, would be his.

"*Not* unload before, and buy in the stock *after* the smash!" he murmured faintly. And he was so overcome by the enormity of Mr. Wybird's dual suggestion that his trembling hand almost refused its office as he sought reinvigoration by hastily filling and emptying his glass.

"And where the Hebrides," he demanded, being thus strengthened, "do *we* come in? You're drunk, Wybird, that's what's the matter with you. You're drunk as a boiled owl!"

"Where we come in," Mr. Wybird answered, with a calm precision which sufficiently refuted the Colonel's rudely sweeping charge, is on the reorganization. If you'll think for half a minute, Colonel, you'll see yourself what I mean. It's this way: I've got what I know to be the best piece of undeveloped mining property in New Mexico. The mill-run value of the outcrop is twenty dollars. A section of the vein, ten feet in, assayed forty dollars. As it goes in, the vein thickens. We're within less than seven miles of the railroad, and with such an easy water-grade from the track to the mine that the stamps and boilers 'll almost carry each other in. Close around the claim there's all the timber we

need for shedding and firewood, and a lot to spare. With a forty-foot dam in the cañon of the Chama we'll have a storage supply of more water than we can use all the year round. There's a bed of clay—"

"Oh come off!" struck in the Colonel in a tone of weariness. This isn't any place for fooling with prospectusses. Mrs. Mortimer's nobody's lamb, and I'm not either. What I want to know is what my whack's to be when we market the shares—s'posin', that is, we don't spend all our lives in this sort of fool-talk and do market 'em; and then s'posin' we don't get drunk enough to work your fool racket of buyin' 'em back again after the mine's gone to everlastin' smash. You make me tired, Wybird. Talk sense, if you're sober enough to talk sense; an' if you're not"—here the Colonel hiccoughed—"wa-wait till y' are!"

"In short," continued Mr. Wybird, not in the least ruffled by the reflections cast upon his sense and his sobriety, "the cost of developing The Laughing Girl will be next to nothing, and as soon as she's developed she'll give me all the money I want. But what cinches me is that I haven't the spot cash to develop her. I've got to make a raise big enough to start her up, and that means that I've got to market a good third of the shares—and then, when we get to work, I'll only get a third of what we clean up from the stamps. I want it all—that is, you and I together want it all; and what's more we're going to get it. My plan's the simplest thing you ever saw. We'll market the shares, but instead of developing the property—"

"We'll hang on to the money and divide," struck in the Colonel with a jovial chuckle. "Now you're talkin' out square at last!"

"Instead of developing the property," repeated Mr. Wybird calmly, "we'll let the smash come right on. The shares 'll go down to nothing, and everybody 'll curse us the worst kind."

"So they will! So they will!" the Colonel assented, still chuckling. "I've been there myself, Wybird—but I don't mind getting there on a cash basis a few times more."

"But you haven't been there in quite my way," said Mr. Wybird. "It's just at this point that my plan begins. I've kept, you understand, one third of the stock as representing my transfer to the Company of the claim; and you figure on the books as owning another third by purchase. Now at a capitalization of $200,000, with sales at, say, thirty and all expenses charged off, we'll pull out from the third we sell a clear $25,000. That 'll be enough, if we work close, to open the mine. Very good. Then we'll have the smash; and as soon as we've got most of the shares back in our own hands we'll reorganize and come the high-toned honesty racket—issue a card over our own names saying we've believed in the mine from the start and believe in it still; that we've acted throughout in absolute good faith, and that to prove it we're ready to buy at par all the stock that's offered to us. That card will fetch The Laughing Girl up again with such a bounce that it won't be human nature if the few outsiders we've left with holdings 'll want to sell. They'll believe

in the mine then for dead sure, and 'll hang on for dividends or a bigger rise. While they're waiting they'll do just the kind of talking we want. What's more, we'll give 'em something to talk about. A little before we make the smash you shall go out to the mine, and come back East right after the reorganization with a confidence-restoring report. Everybody knows you, Colonel, for a mining expert, and a report over your signature 'll carry conviction on its face. And then we'll sail in on a second boom. You can sell out for good then if you want to. I'll hold on—and you'd better hold on with me—and work the mine. But whichever way you go there's big money to be made: two sets of profits from share-emission, or all the working capital we need for nothing and big dividends from production to tie to in the end. And the point of the whole thing is that we'll be absolutely solid in case anybody tries to raise a row: for we can prove by the books and by the certificates themselves that we've never parted with a dollar's worth of our holding, and we can prove that when the whole thing seemed to be busted we actually bought back all the stock that was offered to us at par.

"Now that's my game—and if you can show me a better way to play it I'm ready for any advice that you've got to give." And Mr. Wybird—with the polite air of one who awaited, yet scarcely expected, valuable counsel—leaned back in his chair easily and appreciatively sipped his wine.

Even had Colonel Withersby been disposed to

offer advice, its value at that juncture would have been rather more than open to question. But for once in his life he recognized the fact that he was in the presence of a master-intellect superior to any advice that was his to give. The simple majesty of the plan thus outlined by Mr. Wybird fairly overawed him. The delicate flattery implied in the suggestion that *he* should make a confidence-restoring report brought refreshment and exaltation to his soul. Had he been trained in the customs of the Orient he assuredly would have manifested his respect for the presence in which he found himself by removing his shoes. His training having been strictly Occidental, he expressed his veneration in different but equivalent terms. Rising with some difficulty to his feet, and maintaining himself in an approximately upright position by holding fast to the back of his chair, he uttered unsteadily but with deep emotion these words: "Take my hat, Wybird! Take it—it's yours. I guess there hasn't been a fly on you since the day you was born!"

IV

In the immediate wake of that agreeable supper-party the march of events was such as to strengthen Colonel Withersby's bravely sanguine convictions, and even to kindle in Mrs. Mortimer's doubting bosom the pure flame of hope.

Treated by the Colonel with a florid veracity, the alluring possibilities of The Laughing Girl Mineral

Extraction and Water-Power Company, Limited, were embodied in a prospectus which justified his assertion that it would start gold dollars on a full jump after the shares. The water-power part was his own addition to the scheme. Nothing, he said, took hold of investors like a sawmill—and he demonstrated by a series of simple calculations that all the cost of developing the mine could be covered by the profits accruing from getting out cross-ties for the railroads and from the sale of lumber for building purposes in Pueblo and Santa Fé.

The effectiveness of the Colonel's glowing prophecies was sufficiently proved by the fact that, temporarily at least, they carried conviction to himself. As his redundant fancy played fervently around Mr. Wybird's strong statements in regard to the positive richness of the mine, and the natural advantages which assured its development at a relatively trifling cost, his enthusiastic nature was stirred to its depths; and by the time that his ornate composition was ready for the printer his faith in The Laughing Girl was as complete as that which Mr. Wybird himself consistently had avowed.

Colonel Withersby's self-conversion, it should be stated, was a process entirely natural and amply precedented. As a great many people had found out to their confusion and sorrow, the quality which made him most successful as a promoter was his extraordinary capacity for believing absolutely in any project whatever when once he had it fairly launched. On the other hand, this very strength of belief—by which he was enabled to make other people be-

lieve with him—became in the crisic moments of his ventures his most dangerous weakness; since its tendency was to make him hold on when every principle of prudence urged him to let go. The struggle which at such times took place between his faith and his reason would have afforded to a professional authoress of irreligious novels a suitable and edifying theme; and the more so because his reason usually triumphed in time to bring him out safe from the wreck in which were involved together his disciples and his creed. A philosopher studying the psychology of promotion would have found much to interest him in this curious double consciousness—this capacity for temporarily believing in his own disbeliefs—which was characteristic of Colonel Withersby's mind.

Certainly, for the successful launching of the enterprise in which he and Mr. Wybird were engaged together, his access of faith was opportune. With an honest bluntness, Mr. Wybird freely admitted that he had no money whatever for preliminary expenses; and had the Colonel declined to make the initial outlay—cash payments being essential in such cases—the fortunes of The Laughing Girl Mineral Extraction and Water-Power Company, Limited, would have been brought up at the very outset with a round turn. But he did not decline. Out of his own pocket he paid in advance for the printing of his self-convincing prospectus; paid the bank-note company in advance for the engraving and printing of the stock-certificates; paid in advance the first quarter's rent for the Company's office; and, finally,

made the necessary advance payments to the Wall Street newspaper men for the spontaneous eulogies with which The Laughing Girl was introduced to the financial world. Thus it came to pass that the very first gold dollars to jump after the shares, in fulfilment of his prophecy, were his own—and were nearly all that remained to him of his winnings in Bogotá.

Yet the depletion of his reserve, while momentarily embarrassing, was far from disheartening: for The Laughing Girl, thanks to the drawing qualities of his prospectus, and to his skill in working the newspapers, caught the favor of the public in a way so in keeping with her cheery name that at the end of a couple of months he might have pulled out from the game with winnings which left his original stake nowhere. Naturally, under these circumstances, his reason asserted itself and his faith declined. Left to his own devices, he would have pulled out in a hurry; and that he did violence to his own convictions by continuing to stand in was due wholly to Mr. Wybird's exceptional capacity for uniting immoral suasion with material restraint.

In strong terms Mr. Wybird declared that if the Colonel failed to adhere to their programme—that is to say, to play on through the prearranged smash and reorganization to the second issue of stock—he would be every known variety of imprecated fool; and he emphasized his discourteous conclusion by forcibly restating the case in favor of standing by their plan for getting, as he tersely phrased it, two shearings from one flock of lambs. But in spite of this urgent deliverance of opinion and argument the

Colonel was not convinced. His spots could not be changed all in a moment, and had the way been open to him he assuredly would have closed out—with a studied unostentation—the script which represented his one-third interest, and so would have left Mr. Wybird to test the merits of his peculiar system of promotion alone.

In point of fact, the way was not open to him. Of course Mr. Wybird could not have believed for a moment that a breach of faith on the part of so honorable an associate was possible; yet had he confidently anticipated such a breach he could not have guarded against it by any more effective means than those which he had employed.

"You know, Colonel," he said frankly, when they had finished the work of signing The Laughing Girl stock-certificates, "there's all sorts of crookedness in mining deals, and unless you've made a good many close assays of a man you never can feel sure what game he'll try to come on you. Now you and I haven't trained together long, and we only have each other's word for it that we mean to play square. What I think we ought to do is to fix things so that we can't play any other way. Let's bunch our two-thirds of this stuff together and put it in a safe-deposit vault subject to our joint order. Then we'll each of us know that the other can't be up to any monkey-tricks in the way of unloading on the sly. And what we get from the third we sell we'll fix in the same way—jug it to our joint account in bank. That's a fair deal to both of us, isn't it? What do you say?"

Of course, to such a proposition there was only one answer possible; and because he had given that answer the Colonel found his hands tied at a moment when he very earnestly desired that they should be free. His gorge rose as he recognized the restraint laid upon him; and his alarm still farther was excited by the intelligence with which that restraint had been applied. He was oppressed by gloomy forebodings, and somewhat nervously confided to Mrs. Mortimer his doubts as to whether Mr. Wybird was quite as wild and woolly as he had at first appeared.

"Considering that he set out by saying that he didn't know a blasted thing about business," said the Colonel, in an injured tone, "he's caught on altogether too blank fast. I'm not running things—he's running 'em himself, and I'm not in it. He's got a cinch on me now that's making me squirm. I don't want to hold on, and he won't let me let go. I've got to play the game through his way, or pull out dead busted—with nothing to show for the money I put up but a black eye. To think of *my* getting into a hole like this! I guess the best thing I can do with myself is to kick myself off the Battery for a fat-eyed fool!" And the Colonel filled his glass wearily, and emptied it with a heavy sigh.

When a strong man is overcome by doubt and sorrow 'tis the part of lovely woman to hearten and console. Colonel Withersby, however, did not expect a great deal in this line from Mrs. Mortimer—who, having much in common with Cassandra, was less to be depended upon as an administratrix of consolation than of chillingly cautionary advice or

reproof. Therefore was he surprised, and also comforted, when she nourished with a lively optimism his waning hope. In strong terms she avowed her faith in Mr. Wybird's methods, and urged him to conform to them; and she fortified practically her declaration of opinion by the statement that she had no intention of selling her own ten shares of Laughing Girl—the little block of stock with which, early in the enterprise, Mr. Wybird had endowed her in consideration of her playful promise to be the mascotte of the mine.

Possibly the Colonel's surprise would have been increased, certainly his comfort would have been diminished, had he known that in the concluding clause of the lady's utterance the quality of truthfulness was a little strained. Her declaration that she did not intend to sell her shares was precise to the letter, but it left something in the way of spiritual precision to be desired—inasmuch as, a day or two earlier, after a confidential interview with Mr. Wybird in which the necessity had been canvassed of bracing up the Colonel's waning faith, that woolly gentleman had bought them back from her at par. The primary reason, therefore, why she did not intend to sell her stock was that it already was sold.

Although momentarily heartened by Mrs. Mortimer's disinterested words of cheer, the Colonel continued to find most galling the strain put upon him by adherence to Mr. Wybird's plan; and the strain grew tenser as the moment approached when the smash was to be precipitated, with its sequent issue of the high-toned honesty card to the stock-

holders and the buying-in of the depreciated securities: a monstrous method of procedure against which every conviction derived from his long experience with bottomless corporations rose in tumultuous revolt. Indeed, he was thankful when the time came for him to get out of it all by going to New Mexico to prepare his confidence-restoring report—although for the making of that gayly imaginative instrument he was in a most unfit mood. A sullen rage possessed him, and he was the prey to a melancholy beyond the power of alcoholic stimulus to relieve: for even cocktails fail of their cheerful function in the case of a man who believes firmly that Fate is haling him at a gallop into the passes of despair.

V

If a bird of the air may be a disseminator of intelligence, much more so may be the "runner" for a hotel. The runner for the Casa Napoléon, one Pedro Salazar—whose duty it was to board steamers arriving from Spanish-American and West-Indian ports to solicit patronage for the establishment—was a thin old Cuban who had seen better days. Worse days he scarcely could expect than those upon which he had fallen. Bitter words were his portion from Madame when he came back from the docks patronless; bitter words often were his portion from the patrons whom he secured, on the ground that through his misrepresentations their patronage had been ill-bestowed; and between

whiles his soul was wounded by the way in which the American frequenters of the restaurant called him "Pete," and ordered him to serve them precisely as they ordered the Cuban negro Telésforo—for whom, having himself owned blacks in his day, he had a proper scorn.

For Colonel Withersby this fallen gentleman had a warmly friendly feeling, the Colonel being one of the very few persons of his dingy acquaintance who treated him with the consideration to which he had been accustomed in his better times. When his spirit had been ruffled by the contemptuous liberties taken with his name, and by brusquely delivered orders, and by trifling gifts of silver coin, he found a soothing solace in being addressed by the Colonel as Don Pedro or Señor Salazar and invited as an equal to take a cocktail; and still more kindling to the sad embers of his self-esteem—since thus he was enabled to confer a favor, not to receive one—was the Colonel's occasional subtly flattering request for a cigar.

Various motives, of which no doubt benevolence was one, prompted the Colonel's handsome conduct. He was glad to keep in practice the useful forms of Spanish courtesy which he had acquired among Spanish Americans while promoting various projects presumptively for their benefit and undeniably for his own; he was glad to smoke Don Pedro's cigars which, being picked up aboard incoming steamers, were well worth having at the cost of a few civil words; and he was glad to have the information—also picked up aboard incoming steam-

ers—which Don Pedro frequently gave him concerning the guests arriving at the Casa from the Islands or from the Spanish Main: for this information was apt to be valuable both to the oncoming strangers and to himself; that is to say, valuable to the Colonel substantially, and to the strangers in that, through his possession and considerate use of it, their store of worldly wisdom often was materially enlarged. But the Colonel wasted no time upon analysis of his motives. He was content to cheer Don Pedro with courtesy and cocktails, and to leave to the accusing buyers to settle before Heaven's high chancery how much of his affability should be set down to self-interest and how much to pure kindness of heart.

It was over a noon cocktail, on the day of his intended departure for New Mexico, that the Colonel informed Don Pedro of the journey that he was about to take; and incidentally added the farther information that during his absence Mr. Wybird would have charge of the affairs of The Laughing Girl.

"But the Señor Viburdo himself departs to-day upon a journey," commented Don Pedro.

"No, Señor, he remains in New York."

"But it is for himself that he has bought the passage."

"Bought a passage for where? What the dickens are you talking about? Shake yourself, old man—you're off your head!" In the interest excited by this curious statement the Colonel dropped out of his elegant Spanish into his vernacular, in which

elegance was not always the quality most sharply marked.

"It is true, Señor," Don Pedro answered. "Yesterday, on the dock of the line for the Isthmus, I heard the Señor Viburdo making his inquiries in regard to the hour at which the *Comal* would depart to-day; and he assuredly spoke of himself as the passenger who was to go. It was not a matter that concerned me. I did not pay close attention to his words. But I am confident that I make no mistake. It was his desire, he explained, to escape the annoyance of the crowd by going on board some hours before the ship started; and the matter was so arranged. The *Comal* sails at three o'clock this afternoon."

Colonel Withersby's mental processes were rapid. On the instant that he received this precise information his concept of its meaning crystallized into the conviction that Mr. Wybird was running away. Whereupon, raging, he gave vent to sulphurous speech and dashed his empty glass—even in his rage he would not thus have treated a full one—with great violence upon the floor.

Although accustomed to West-Indian hurricanes, Señor Salazar was not less startled by the suddenness of this lurid outburst than surprised by the instantly ensuing calm—as the Colonel, having freed his mind, promptly bent the full force of his energies to countervailing a situation in which he believed his peril to be extreme. With a quiet direction to the barkeeper to charge the broken glass to his account, he led the way into the smoking-room—just

then deserted—and said in quiet tones: "My friend, this is a matter of much importance, and one in which I must ask for your help. I beg that you will go at once to the dock and ascertain for me the number of the state-room which the Señor Wybird occupies. Your inquiries must be made guardedly, in a way that will not excite curiosity. For that I rely upon your excellent discretion; and I entrust the affair to you, Señor, because my own appearance in it would be unwise. Moreover, there is another and even more important duty to which I instantly must attend." And dropping from Spanish into English the Colonel added: "Hustle for all you're worth, Don Pedro! Scoot down to the dock and back here again as if Apaches were after you. This thing's hell and high water broken loose together, and we've got to work fast!"

Probably Señor Salazar did not perfectly understand this terse concluding metaphor. But he did understand that extreme haste was necessary. In a moment he was off.

Not less rapid were the Colonel's own motions. He did not doubt that Mr. Wybird was endeavoring to get away with all the cash so far obtained from the stock of The Laughing Girl. As he reflected, half a forgery—that is to say, a cheque on which only one of the signatures was forged—would have put at his friend's disposition the funds deposited to their joint account in bank. But the same process would have released from the safe-deposit vaults, and so would have enabled Mr. Wybird to sell, the reserved two-thirds of the certificates; and

if that had been his game, as seemed probable, the Colonel saw his own way clearly to a line of action that would bring him out of a doubtful situation not only with flying colors but with very substantial gains.

The occasion was not one for mincing matters. Time pressed. To obtain quickly the necessary information in regard to the certificates there was just one way; and the Colonel—whose skill as a penman also was considerable, and whose disposition was not to stick at trifles when important issues were at stake—took that way.

In something less than sixty minutes after his interview with Señor Salazar, he presented at the desk of the safe-deposit company an order for admission to the vaults to which duly was appended Mr. Wybird's signature together with his own. Within five minutes more he stood before the open drawer in which should have been the certificates—and found it, as he had expected to find it, as bare as the palm of his hand.

VI

Reference already has been made to the fact that, when hustling was necessary, Colonel Withersby was a person who hustled. The fibre of his sturdy nature was of the sort that stiffens when dangers menace, and his strong soul ever was ready to try conclusions with Fate. Nor was he often hampered (as has just been shown) by the requirements of convention when the need arose for bringing Fate

shortly to terms. His habit was to go at such exigent situations horns down.

From the exigent situation created by Mr. Wybird's irregular actions all traces of conventionality already had been removed: in the first instance by that gentleman's method of obtaining the certificates—and also, presumably, of closing the joint bank-account; and in the second by the detective process which the Colonel himself had employed. A reversion to ordinary legal usages, therefore, was as impracticable as it was undesirable: for the Colonel knew very well that to proceed in a regular way, by arresting Mr. Wybird and bringing him before the courts, would be to bring also before the courts the eccentric affairs of The Laughing Girl—and that simply would be to plump all the fat at once into the fire. And so, with his customary vigor, he took the law into his own hands—and applied it with such celerity that by a little after two o'clock his cab was rattling down Canal Street to the dock of the Pacific Mail. But his haste was not precipitation. On his way to the dock he had obtained from Señor Salazar the number of Mr. Wybird's stateroom. Also, he had purchased a large and strong valise. He knew precisely what he meant to do, and how he meant to do it—this resolute gentleman whose head was quite refreshingly cool.

As he walked up the gang-plank, clouds of black smoke were pouring from the funnel of the *Comal*; at intervals her wheel made a half-turn; from her exhaust-pipes came the hiss of escaping steam. Evidently, there was not much time to lose. That

there might not be enough time left for his purposes, and that he might be compelled to take a voyage to the tropics, struck him as an imminent possibility. He gritted his teeth as this thought presented itself —but resolutely, and with the unuttered reflection that, if necessary, he would go on a voyage to a region quite super-tropical in order to bring Mr. Wybird to terms.

His knock at the door of state-room 73 elicited no response, and his trial of the knob showed that the door was locked. That Mr. Wybird should be coy, under the circumstances, was only natural; and as the Colonel had no desire to use force he resorted to persuasion.

"I have a policeman on the dock," he said, speaking very distinctly but in guardedly low tones, "but he needn't come on board unless you want him. We can make our deal on the quiet, if you'll open the door right away."

There was a slight sound of movement within, but the door remained closed.

"There's not much time, you know," he continued. "I can give you only half a minute—and I've got my watch in my hand."

For twenty seconds there was a strained silence. Then the bolt shot back and the door opened. Mr. Wybird was standing inside with a revolver in his hand. On his face, however, was an irresolute expression not at all in keeping with his display of this deadly weapon. In fact, his look suggested that he was scared.

"Oh, come off with your gun," said the Colonel

cheerfully, at the same time good-naturedly waving the revolver aside and then setting down his valise and closing and locking the door. "You're young, Wybird, and fresh—very fresh. You'd smash the whole business, you know, if you went to shooting here. It's because you are so young and so fresh, I suppose, that you've tried to work this thing in this perfectly fool way. Just didn't know any better—because you was so green! But I'm not the kind to be hard on a tenderfoot; and even if you have put me to a little extra trouble I'll forgive your monkey-tricks and we'll settle on the square just the same."

It is unlikely that Mr. Wybird had been cut out for a hero. If he had, he was a misfit. He half raised his pistol—and instantly dropped it again as he observed the Colonel's kindly but dissuading smile. He glanced toward the door; but it was locked, and against it was the Colonel's back. "Well," he said weakly, "what do you want?"

"What I want," the Colonel answered, "is my share. You're a hog, Wybird. You're the worst hog I ever laid eyes on—trying to work this racket that 'd disgrace an Apache. But there's no hog about me, and all I'm after is a square divide. And you can bet your life I'm going to have it. For I tell you what I am—and it's something you never were and never will be—I'm a Man!"

There was such earnestness in Colonel Withersby's deliverance, and his resolute air was so in keep-

ing with his words, that Mr. Wybird's misfit heroism still farther oozed away.

"The thing stands this way," the Colonel continued. "You've grabbed all there is to clean up from The Laughing Girl, and you have it right here in gold. I'm after my half. When I've got it you can clear out with the rest—like the fresh fool that you are."

"But suppose I haven't it here," Mr. Wybird interpolated.

"You mean." corrected the Colonel, "suppose you refuse to divide. But you will. I'm here to make you." And then, in amiably expository tones, he added: "Don't you see that I'm giving you a handsome show? I'm not doing it because I love you, but because I want to take care of myself. I've only to step to the side of the steamer and call up the policeman I have waiting on the dock—and you'll lose your whole stake and go to jug besides. Very likely I'd lose my stake too; but I'd be no worse off that way than if I let you get away with what you've corralled. It's half or nothing for both of us, and you've got to make up your mind in a hurry whether you mean to save your half, and yourself from jug, by dividing right here. I sized you up at the start, Wybird, for a woolly chump, and I must say that you're about the blastedest woolliest chump that ever was; but even you ought to see that there's only one thing under heaven for you to do. Now be quick—is it, or isn't it, a go?"

And Mr. Wybird, yielding to the logic of the situation, replied that it was a go.

Five minutes before the *Comal* started upon her voyage for the Isthmus Colonel Withersby came down the gang-plank. He carried a large valise that evidently was of great weight. Mr. Wybird, whose face was quite pale and drawn, leaned over the rail watching him. Having reached the dock, the Colonel set down his heavy load and turned around. He was the last man to leave the ship. A moment later the gang-plank was swung down; and then the quarter-rail was set in place, the hawsers were cast loose, and a quiver ran through the vessel as her wheel began to turn.

"Well, so long, old man!" the Colonel called cheerfully, but Mr. Wybird did not reply. The Colonel continued to smile—standing easily, with one foot on the heavy valise—as the *Comal* very slowly began to move. "And about that policeman, you know," he added in a friendly tone, while his smile broadened, "he was just a bluff. Take care of yourself down there—and be sure to wear thick shoes. You need 'em. I don't believe your feet ever 'll get what you really can call hard."

Mr. Wybird's face did not wear an agreeable expression as this parting information and advice was presented to him. But genial benevolence fairly radiated from all portions of the Colonel's person as he gave it—while the *Comal* slid out into the river and began her voyage downward to the far regions of the southern sea.

It had been a close call for the Colonel—but his strike was made!

VII

For once in his chequered career, Colonel Withersby was enabled to retire from an incorporated catastrophe in a manner that left him stainless before the world. This was not the result of accident, but of skilful play: by which he instantly had perceived Mr. Wybird's tactical blunder, and had taken advantage of it to make a full-freighted scapegoat of him—although he actually carried into the wilderness only half a load.

However, nobody but his consignor knew that the scapegoat went out light; and the Colonel, therefore, was in a position to, and did, pose with great dignity as a victim of misplaced confidence; and he did it so well that much of his success in floating his next venture—The South-Eastern Colorado Ditch and Milling Company, Limited—was due to the sympathy excited by his undeniable assertion that he was the heaviest individual loser by the defalcation and flight of the treasurer of The Laughing Girl.

By a curious coincidence, Mrs. Mortimer adopted toward the Colonel a line of policy that practically was identical with his own toward the investing public. She also posed as a victim, and she also did it very well. Adding a little to the load which Mr. Wybird carried in his capacity of scapegoat, she declared that he had induced her to return to him her block of mascotte stock only a week before he perfidiously sailed away. This statement, while

exact, was incomplete, as she neglected to add that he had paid her for it. But it was sufficiently complete for her purposes. For the Colonel—failing to follow the thread of her delicately discriminating veracity, and warm with a generous desire to share his good fortune with his friends—instantly made good her supposititious loss. Thus, to some extent, were the eternal balances preserved.

MONSIEUR LE DOCTEUR THÉOPHILE

I



S the result of what all three of them —that is to say, Madame, Don Anastasio, and Dr. Théophile himself —came in time to believe was a direct interposition of Providence, Dr. Théophile ate the very first dinner that ever was cooked and served in the Casa Napoléon. By this statement I do not mean to imply, of course, that Dr. Théophile ate the whole of that memorable dinner—he being a lean man, and temperate—but such portions of it as were served in the ordinary manner to the ordinary diner at the ordinary charge of half a dollar—"*vin et café compris.*"

For Dr. Théophile—only, at that time, he had not achieved his doctorate—it was a dinner which marked the beginning in his life of a new epoch, and the seasoning of it was rare: for to his sanguine taste the pepper of it was Ambition, and the salt of it was Hope! That very afternoon he had landed in New York: come thither from his native island of Guadeloupe to begin the studies which were to make him,

as he believed confidently, one of the great physicians of the world. His future seemed to him as vast as the Continent upon which for the first time his feet rested, and as brilliant as the glowing colors of the sunset which blazed in the western heavens above the Jersey hills. His own soul was brighter than the sunset, and there seemed to be no limit to the glad swelling of his heart. And all this was reasonable and natural: for he was just one-and-twenty; and his foot was on the first round of Fame's ladder—and he was in love!

As to his coming to the Casa Napoléon, it seemed to be—until the Providential interposition theory was evolved later—the result of a mere whiff of chance: due to his turning to the left, instead of turning to the right, when he set forth from his lodgings in Macdougal Street (to which a fellow-passenger on the steamer had directed him) to stroll in the maze of that new strange city in the sunset glow. But there was nothing of chance in his entering the Casa Napoléon when his wanderings brought him to its hospitably open doorway. Out from that doorway came smells that to a man wanting a dinner were irresistible; and almost as tempting, to Dr. Th ophile, was the bilingual sign above it—brave with brand-new gilding—which gave promise that he might hold converse with those within in either of the two languages in which he was entirely at home—and so be spared from painful tamperings with the English tongue. Only a week before, in Guadeloupe, he had been very proud of his English. For a year

he had toiled to acquire it; and had toiled gladly, because it was the necessary foundation-stone of the studies in medicine which were to bring him fame. But his first three hours of practical experience had convinced him, dissatisfyingly, that the English that he had learned in Guadeloupe was not by any means the English that was spoken in New York. Therefore the gilded word "Casa," in conjunction with the properly accented gilded name "Napoléon," made up a golden legend which instantly enticed him—even as Don Anastasio astutely had designed that those words should entice Spanish and French wayfarers carrying little baggage of English speech—to enter and to be at ease.

Being the first stranger to cross the threshold of that new-founded hostelry, and being—as was proclaimed by his trig short frock-coat worn jauntily, and by his highly tropical panama hat—precisely the sort of stranger who was awaited there eagerly, his welcome was of the warmest: for Madame, with the hopeful eyes of Toulouse, and Don Anastasio, with the keen eyes of Mexico, saw in him something very like a herald angel—the leader of a magnificent procession of patrons, ever increasing as the prosperous years rolled onward, which would make Don Anastasio's investment of Mexican silver dollars (saved from the wreck of the revolution that had whirled him out of that volcanic Republic) increase until it became a good deal more than a tidy fortune, and which would send the glories of Madame's Toulousian cooking ringing about the hemispheres through the trumpet of Fame.

In ten minutes—such is the cordial way with the Latin races—the three were old friends together. Speaking in sonorous Spanish, Don Anastasio descanted upon the honorable ambition which he and Madame cherished to make the Casa Napoléon the very first of the second-class hotels of the civilized world, and quoted appositely the ninety-seventh law of the First Partida of Alonzo the Wise, King of Castile in the thirteenth century.

Speaking in the softened French of the Midi, Madame endorsed Don Anastasio's application of the ancient theories of the Wise Alonzo to the modern practice of hotel-keeping—but with some enlarging reservations. For Madame—having been born but the width of a river and a mountain chain away from Gascony—was of a nobly sanguine temperament and had no notion of confusing the future of the Casa Napoléon to a mere succession of days of small things. That was well enough for a beginning, she said; but intimated that at the end of the bright vista down which she gazed with more than a mere optical optimism there rose a castellated structure to be frequented by travelling princes, and to be described by still unborn Baedekers as "*Hôtel du Ire ordre, le plus élégant, mais assez cher*"—and Madame, thinking of the bills to be made out in the case of the travelling princes, rolled the words "*mais assez cher*" luxuriously under her tongue!

But they did not confine themselves, those kindly souls, to their own hopes and ambitions. With a warm sympathy they entered into the hopes and ambitions which their guest—speaking in a French

even more softened than Madame's, or in a Spanish as sonorous as Don Anastasio's own—eagerly confided to them. Before the dinner was half over they were as enthusiastic as he was about the fame that was to be his as a great physician; and by the time that the dinner was ended Madame was a sharer—a word and a look, quite lost upon Don Anastasio, made this subtle matter clear to her—in the still dearer love-hopes which filled and brightened the young fellow's heart.

At last—their enthusiasms bounding and rebounding between them until their spirits were uplifted to airy heights of confidence in a glorious future—Madame with her own hands brought up a bottle of the burgundy that subsequently was to become famous (just bottled from the bargain cask, and because of its rich promise of future excellence a beverage most appropriate to the occasion) and in that strong young wine they all together drank to the realization of the strong young hopes which filled their souls: to the future greatness of Dr. Théophile; to the future glories of the Casa Napoléon! And with this toast a third sentiment was embodied—though Don Anastasio did not perceive the exchange of glances which expressed it, and so had no share in it—and this was: to the crowning happiness of a happy love!

II

Shut up for twenty years in its glass prison, the burgundy, at least, had realized its youthful promise

of perfection. Madame, indeed, was rather anxious about it: and was half glad, half sorry, that only a dozen or so of bottles—an almost sacred deposit, incomparably cobwebbed and dusty—remained in a corner of the bin. But some of the other youthful promises, to which Madame and Don Anastasio and Dr. Théophile had drunk together on that day of the first dinner in the Casa Napoléon, had not fared so well.

Let me hasten to add that, so far as the fortunes of the Casa Napoléon were concerned, any very lively regrets would be wasted. It is true that Madame's too-sanguine Gascon imaginings had not been realized. No Baedeker had written that it was an "*hôtel du Ire ordre, le plus élégant, mais assez cher*"; and—although on one exalted occasion it had sheltered a Marques—no travelling princes had come within its gates to learn from Don Anastasio what wonders could be wrought with "extras" in a skilfully manipulated bill. But, on the other hand, the fame of Madame's Toulousian cooking had travelled far over at least one hemisphere—mainly to the islands of the Caribbean and to most of the countries of the Spanish Main—and with it had travelled also a good account of the cleanliness and comfort which kept worthy company with her soulfully considered bills of fare. Therefore did travellers from those distant regions come, and come again, to the Casa Napoléon: and throughout the spring and summer and autumn, when these southern folk were most in evidence, there was such a clatter in the big dining-room of softened French and of ringing Span-

ish, and such a show of foreign faces, grading upward from Haytian jet-black to mere sunburned Spanish-American brown, that it seemed as though half the mainland and half the islands of the sea were there! And if princes came not, there did come now and then—centrifugally outshot and violently projected thither by their own revolutions—black or brown or coffee-colored ex-presidents of the Haytian Republic: upon whom Don Anastasio got in some very fine work indeed in the bill-making way.

Nor did the Casa Napoléon in the least languish during the close season for revolutions—when ex-presidents had no need of its shelter; nor during the chill time of winter, when its southern patrons wisely stayed at home. Indeed, had never a wandering foreigner signed his name on Don Anastasio's register, there still was a local clientèle that would have kept the wolf a long way from the door. Monsieur Duvent—dealer in a highly respectable gaming establishment in South Fifth Avenue — never even dreamed of eating his daily dinner and drinking his daily half-bottle of Pontet-Canet elsewhere; Colonel Withersby—well and unfavorably known to a large circle of Spanish Americans whom he had interested in tramway promotions under varying conditions but with uniform results—always made the Casa his headquarters when in New York; so did Polly and Ned Harrison—known professionally as Miss Violet Bream and Mr. Claude Dunbar—when they were so fortunate as to have a metropolitan engagement, or so unfortunate as not to have any engagement at all; so did Mrs. Myrtle

Vane—a lady of marked illiterary attainments who in winter did society gossip for the "yellowest" wing of the newspaper press, and who in summer faked quite brilliantly scandalous letters from any desired seaside or mountainside fashionable resort; so did Mrs. Mortimer—a ripely charming personage of independent means and engaging accomplishments who always occupied the first floor front during the travelling season, and who made a point of perfecting her French and Spanish by graciously cordial intercourse with the more elegant of the male travellers who came up from southern lands. And besides these residents, who made a pleasantly friendly company in the dining-room, the restaurant of the Casa was crowded nightly by a very lively throng of artists and newspaper men, and by a handsome representation of the public at large.

Even Madame, in the depths of her heart, was satisfied with the good fortune that deservedly had attended their venture; and Don Anastasio, most tactlessly, confronted her with her contentment when—as happened sometimes—the thought of how her Gascon imaginings of princes had not materialized caused her to repine: and his ill-advised attempt at too philosophic comforting invariably led to his having a very bad quarter of an hour. But he was a true philosopher, was Don Anastasio, and when these storms burst upon him he bowed to them in silence: which offensively defensive passivity, after momentarily aggravating their violence, of necessity led onward to a calm. On the part of

Don Anastasio himself there was no repining. He was more than content with the happy results which had flowed from his application of the precepts of the wise King Alonzo to the practice of keeping a first-class second-class hotel.

III

From my list of the patrons of the Casa Napoléon I have omitted purposely the name of Dr. Théophile: and this not because he was the least, but because he was the greatest of them—the dean of that faculty of good cheer. His table in the snuggest corner of the dining-room—under the glazed door of the closet on the shelves of which were ranged (empty) wine-bottles bearing the impressive names of half the châteaux and schlosses in Christendom—was sacred to him; so sacred that a coffee-colored ex-President of Hayti had left the Casa in dudgeon because he was not permitted to occupy it. That Don Anastasio and Madame had made such a sacrifice of interest to friendship shows pointedly how warm their friendship was; nor was it lessened, though the sting of losing so well-paying a guest was palliated, by the fact that Don Anastasio got in on the departing ex-President a victorious parting shot in the shape of a brilliantly imaginative bill.

The affectionate esteem in which Dr. Théophile was held, as this incident demonstrates, by the responsible heads of the Casa Napoléon cropped out everywhere throughout the entire establishment.

The *chef* would have got up in the middle of the night to cook a mere mutton chop for him; Léon, the one-eyed French waiter, and Telésforo, the coal-black Cuban waiter, fairly tumbled over each other in their eagerness to serve him; Marie, the far too good-looking French chambermaid, referred to him habitually as "*cet ange*." Superficially considered, Marie's phrase—as applied to a middle-aged gentleman of sarcastic temperament and crusty speech—did not seem precisely appropriate. But in using it Marie was thinking of the time when her old French grandmother fell ill in her poor little lodging, and was brought by Dr. Théophile to the best room in his own house in Macdougal Street, and there was cared for as though she had been a duchess, and was nursed by a hired nurse at his charges, and so was brought back to life again from death's very door—and so perhaps, regarded in the light of these facts, her phrase was not so far out of the way after all.

It was for value received of this kind, though not always of this degree, that Dr. Théophile—in spite of his sarcasms and his crustiness—had so strong a hold upon so many hearts. When Polly Harrison sprained her ankle on the very day that she got her first engagement north of Fourteenth Street—it was not much of an engagement, but it meant the whole world for Polly—it was Dr. Théophile who miraculously had her on her feet again by the end of a week and ready to play her part. That was the starting-point of Polly's great success—she was starring it two years later—and her gratitude to Dr. Théophile

knew no bounds. Similarly, Mrs. Myrtle Vane was grateful to him for the pick-me-up that he devised for her use when her burden of scandalous columns grew to be over-heavy—a pick-me-up that got her through her work in a canter and that did not leave her, as her favorite green-tea always had left her, as nervous as a cat in the wind. Don Anastasio—who believed, and who acted up to his belief, that a present major pleasure reasonably may be purchased at the cost of a future minor pain—heartily blessed the Doctor's skill in exorcising the biliousness that beset him at irregular but short intervals as the result of his intemperate dallyings with Madame's rich Toulousian dishes. Colonel Withersby swore that there was nobody in the world who could pull off a swelled head like "the Doc"—and so it went all down the line. But grateful to Dr. Théophile beyond all others were a certain Mr. and Mrs. John Rayford, whose home was in Caracas with their rich uncle, Don Guillermo Strahan: for Dr. Théophile had saved Mrs. Rayford's life, there in the Casa Napoléon, when a cruel illness laid hold upon her in a time of great poverty—before they knew that they had any rich uncle at all. When these Caracas people came northward on a visit, as they did every year or two, their explosions of affection really made Dr. Théophile quite uncomfortable—and glad to turn to the needs of Don Guillermo and Don Anastasio, whose reckless feasting together quickly made them targets for his blue pills.

And outside of this circle of grateful hearts close

about him there was a far larger circle of hearts full of gratitude to Dr. Théophile: the possessors of which—an ever-shifting and varying company, of which the only constant factor was that it steadily got larger as the years went on—were the poor whom he loved and served. Some of those to whom he ministered he did not know by name. More he knew by names which he also knew did not belong to them. Down in the South Fifth Avenue region names do not necessarily, as elsewhere, go with persons; and names of convenience are among the recognized and accepted convenances of a society that knows no pride of ancestry, and that frequently has a well-grounded aversion to the parading of ancestral facts. For waifs and astrays from many lands are congregated there: expatriots who have been driven by undeserved misfortune, or by a desire to keep ahead of entirely deserved misfortune, to take refuge in a country where all modestly they may rest unknown.

To these broken brothers Dr. Théophile carried great help and comforting: serving them partly because the example set by San Juan de Dios, that sweet comforter of the desolate, was dear to him; partly from pure love and pity; partly that in the tender work of healing the hurts of his fellows he might dull a little the pain of his own heart-hurt that never could be healed. And so among them he went ministering; and they, trusting and loving him, came in their sickness or in their sorrow confidently to ask help of him—for their broken bodies, for their broken fortunes, for their broken souls. Considered

from a money standpoint it was not a lucrative practice, this of Dr. Théophile's. But that was not the standpoint from which he considered it. He was satisfied with the knowledge that he had a large and ever-growing credit in the Bank of Grateful Hearts.

IV

From the facts set forth in the foregoing summary of events, and still more pointedly from the facts left out of it, the inference justly may be drawn that those high ambitions which so thrillingly had seasoned Dr. Théophile's first dinner in the Casa Napoléon had not been realized. To him the passing years had not brought such glad fulfilment of sanguine forecasts as had come to a very reasonable degree in the case of the little hotel, and in full perfection in the case of Madame's famous cask of burgundy: his practice as a physician had not carried him up many rounds of Fame's ladder; and the tenderer, yet far stronger, ambition that he had cherished—that had been the very life of him—had come to nought.

This withering of his hopes—which had made him, though they knew it not, very closely akin to the broken brothers among whom he ministered—had come to him, as to many a man before him, through the wreck of the chief of them: his hope of winning to himself the very tender yet most strongly upholding comfort of a life-long love. When that failed him, suddenly and cruelly, the other ambition

that had been a part of it failed him also. Being a strong man, he did not suffer despair to conquer him; and his love of his profession held him fast to it—along with the desire, even then well developed, to carry healing and comforting to his fellow-men. But his longing for the top round of Fame's ladder died and was forgotten—save that now and then, when a bitter mood was on him, he revived its memory in sarcastic apostrophe-jibing at his own sorrow by pathologic reflections upon the application of Fame's balsam to a broken heart. His habit of sarcasm, thus developed upon himself, came in time to be a part of his nature. He was for pricking bubbles wherever he found them; but even in the case of bubbles, as was noted by acute observers, the lash of his wit fell as seldom upon the weak as it fell often upon the strong.

Yet for a time after his coming to New York there were no signs of the storm that was gathering for Dr. Théophile; and as the metaphysicians (luckily, I think) have not yet invented a psychic barometer which will give us warning in such matters, and thereby make us miserable before our misfortunes as well as after them, his high hopes stood by him and he was a very happy man.

To Madame, as has been stated, a word and a look—when they were at their health-drinking at that first Casa Napoléon dinner—had given a hint of the deep joy which enriched all other joys for him; and as Madame was the very last woman in the world to rest content with no more than a hint of a love story, and also was a woman of that warmly

sympathetic sort to whom love stories drift naturally, it was not long before she knew the whole of it —and was rather sharply disappointed by finding that it was of the simplest: without a trace of those dangers and difficulties which give to love stories, at least to outsiders, their liveliest zest.

In truth, this love affair of Dr. Théophile's was almost culpably commonplace. The plantations of his father and of his Angèle's father lay side by side. He and she were only children, and had been in love with each other from before they could remember. The strongest hope of their fathers was that they should marry, and so in the end make the two plantations one. Excepting the very slight opposition that had arisen when he developed his desire to become a physician, not the slightest cloud ever had darkened their happiness. Even that cloud had vanished quickly—the two fathers wisely agreeing that it was a good thing for him to have a profession to fall back upon in the not impossible event of the plantations going wrong. And so he and his Angèle were to be married as soon as he had taken his doctor's degree.

Madame almost sniffed when she found that this was the whole of it. She probed for at least a rival: and was met by the absolute assurance that there was not a ghost of one. She ventured to hint that long separations did not tend to safety in the case of lovers who were, respectively, but seventeen and twenty-one years old: and at that the look of the twenty-one-year-old lover became so pained and so reproachful that she took the back-track hurriedly

—not because of any real change in her opinions (Madame was of an age, and had much worldly wisdom) but because of her tenderness for the strong faith that was in his young true heart.

Yet in spite of her worldly wisdom, and of her natural disdain of a love affair in which was only commonplace happiness, Madame could not but find pleasure in watching this young lover's eager joyfulness as he bent himself with all his strength to his studies while the harsh winter went coldly on. For, after all, Madame knew—and the better because of the very fulness of her worldly wisdom—that pure happiness is a far rarer excitement than pure sorrow; and as such is to be admired and rejoiced in when it is found. Therefore, when she had got over being aggrieved because his love story was such a tame love story—and because of her good heart her aggrievedness was not long lasting—Dr. Théophile had the comfort of her warm and cheerful sympathy; and when—the winter and the first term of his studies being ended—he went back all radiantly to Guadeloupe to bask through the summer in southern sunshine and in southern love, she gave him God-speed with all her heart.

But when he came back in the early autumn to go at his work again—walking into the Casa Napoléon with a lagging step very unlike his springing step when he had walked out of it—Madame had need to take but a single glance at him to know that the note of tragedy that would give a direful interest to his too happy love story had come into it at last. His very body seemed to have shrunk and wasted

and his short black frock-coat was all in wrinkles and had lost utterly its jauntiness. Even his panama hat somehow had about it a sorrowing and a hang-dog air. But the outward sign of his inward trouble which to Madame instantly was convincing was the dreary lack-lustre of his sorrowful eyes. Being, as I have said, of an age, Madame had seen that same dreary lack-lustre look in other eyes and knew that its meaning was heart-wreck. Womanlike, though, she did not rest satisfied until she had his word for it—though she knew, of course, what pain she would inflict in probing such a wound. The tenderest and the most truly loving of women are that way: believing, seemingly, that a tragedy that a man is exerting his whole strength to hide and to master can be assuaged by a little kindly talk. At that first round, to be sure, she did not get much out of him. Yet was there enough to justify her worst conclusions in the few words which he said huskily as he broke away with a rough suddenness from her friendly restraining hold upon his arm: "Madame, you spoke bitter truth when you said that hearts are not to be trusted when they are very young!"

V

Naturally, Madame did not rest content with this very vague and general statement of Dr. Théophile's heart-wreck. To do her justice, though, curiosity was far from being the strongest element in her determination to make him tell her all that there was

to tell. She had a lively affection for the young fellow, and she most wanted to get at the very roots of his sorrow because she hoped that she might be able, knowing everything, to advise him into the way of happiness again: for Madame knew, as all women know, that a man's natural disposition in love matters is to get himself into all manner of needless troubles by going wrong in all possible ways. Therefore she gave him no peace until he had made a clean breast to her of everything; and, indeed, having once fairly got started he was glad to go on—finding a certain bitter pleasure in pouring the whole dismal story into her sympathetic heart.

Being a world-crushing calamity that he had to tell about (he felt, as all of us do, that he was the world's centre, and that his personal catastrophes were cataclysmic) he made his story a long one; and Madame, being avid of details in such matters, so far from checking him gave him all encouragement to expand. Closeted in the sitting-room of the best suite—the suite assigned to ex-presidents, when such were in season—they were a whole afternoon over it; and Madame, to avoid interruption, even sent down to the *chef* the key of the store-room: an unprecedented mark of confidence which so astonished that functionary as to render him incapable of abusing it. But for all that Dr. Théophile made his story such a long one, the essence of it may be set forth in a few words.

For a good many years, without his at all suspecting that anything was wrong, things had been going very badly indeed on the plantation. Only a few

days before his arrival in Guadeloupe the climax was reached in a complete and final crash. He had not even seen the old home: when he landed at Basse Terre his father had met him there, come across from the other side of the island, and had told him that the old home was gone—that everything was gone save the merest trifle left over after the settlement with the banks. There was one tiny bit of salvage: the little fortune, his mother's wedding portion, that he had inherited when his mother died. That would have gone, too, of course, had there been debts beyond those which the sale of the plantation had satisfied. And some of it did have to go, he said, in caring through that summer of disaster for his father—whose heartbreak took shape in a low fever which little by little wasted him, and at last put an end together to his unhappiness and to his life.

"And then," said Dr. Théophile, as though in conclusion, "I came back to New York. Here is my only chance. I have enough money to keep body and soul together until I take my degree; and after I have taken my degree it will be my own fault if I starve. Moreover," he added grimly, "I have an uncle in France whose fortune no doubt will come to me—years after its coming will do me any good."

Madame declined, of course, to accept as conclusive this highly premature conclusion—which left the vital part of the matter unaccounted for and hanging in the air. Slowly, under the spur of her questioning, the rest of the story was dragged out of him; and, as he said quite truly, there was very

little to tell—upon which Madame's ultimate severe comment was that if he had had so much as two grains of sense in his whole composition his story would have been longer and would not have had a bad end.

They had separated, he said; but Madame must understand that his Angèle had not precisely thrown him over because of the wreck of his fortunes—she merely had accepted her freedom when he had offered to set her free. And the root of the matter lay in the quarrel that there had been between their fathers—a quarrel that had come when her father (because he was himself in straits, he had said) had refused help to Dr. Théophile's father in the last round of that long fight with the banks. Very possibly the excuse was an honest one; but his father, being half mad over his misfortunes, would not believe it—and such bitter words had passed between them that they had come to open hate. And that, on top of all the other disaster, was what his father had told him on that black day of his arrival in Basse Terre.

At first he was quite stunned, he said; and then, as his wits came back to him a little, it seemed to him that—being a ruined man, and their fathers at open enmity—it was his duty in honor to set her free. (At that Madame groaned.) And so he wrote to her: telling her that for her own good he gave her up willingly, and that he hoped (here his voice broke badly) that she soon would forget him, and that she would have a long and a happy life in the loving care of some less unfortunate man.

"And you sent that letter?" Madame asked icily.

Yes, he had sent it in the end; but not until the very end. He had hoped that some word would come from her. But none came. And so, at last, just before he left Basse Terre, he sent it—and there was no reply! His voice broke again and his look was very piteous. For a moment he was silent. Then he seized Madame's hand, and with a choking sob broke out: "And, oh, I *did* think that she would be true to me—that she would write to me to come to her—that in spite of everything she would hold fast to me! It was my duty to free her—but I did not think that she would be so ready to be set free!"

Having thus come to the climax of his dismal story, this sorrowful lover paused in expectation of comforting and sympathy. But to his pained surprise Madame withdrew her hand sharply; and then —so far from giving him sympathy—gave him such a dressing as few sorrowful lovers ever have been unlucky enough to receive!

Nothing more hopelessly stupid, nothing more cruelly selfish, nothing more utterly heartless, she declared with Toulousian vehemence, ever had come to her knowledge! He had spent three months and more within a day's journey of the woman he professed to love, and never had made a sign of his love to her. By his silence he had given her to understand that he shared in his father's quarrel. Then, coolly, he had written to her that he gave her up "willingly"—and left the island almost as soon as he had planted that stab in her heart! His conduct, she declared hotly, would have been that of a monster—had it not been that of a baby fool! Much

more to the same effect did Madame give him, until he was quite dazed by it: and in the end whipped about suddenly from objurgation to entreaty and implored him to write instantly and recall his cruel words. And then Madame fell to crying softly—quite as though it were a love affair of her own.

To all this he answered gloomily, when he had pulled himself together a little, that it was not for him to write a letter but for her. If she truly had loved him, he said, she would not have suffered him to leave her that way—for all that he was a ruined man. But, being a ruined man, he could not entreat her—even if the quarrel between their fathers had not been in the way. He had hoped with an agonizing hope that she would stay true to him. But no letter had come from her, and his hope was dying—was almost gone.

As if any woman, Madame argued in anger, would make advances after being sent to the right about in that cruel fashion! And again she besought him to write—to write without another moment of delay.

But Dr. Théophile was of a resolute nature—of a pig-headed obstinacy, Madame put it—and having taken what he believed to be the right course he adhered to it. He did not write the letter that Madame so vigorously urged him to write—and the letter that with an ever lessening hope he hoped for never came.

VI

A man who inconsequently lives on after having broken his neck—as happens sometimes—is ac-

counted a curiosity; but no curiosity whatever attaches to the countless men and women who live on with broken hearts. Dr. Théophile lived on that way, and to outward appearances was not much the worse for it. With an energy that was partly dull and partly savage, he ground at his studies; and in due time was rewarded for his grinding by gaining his doctor's degree. After that, in a little while—having a sound knowledge of his profession and a real love for it, and having also three handles to it in his command of three languages—he found that there was standing-room for him of a modest sort in New York. That quite satisfied him. He had given up his notions of fame.

It was a little while after the question of standing-room had been decided in his favor that there came up from Guadeloupe a rumor that his Angèle (as in his heart of hearts he still called her) was to be married —to whom, the rumor did not tell. That sent him to Madame for comforting. But it was very cold comfort that Madame gave him. Did he imagine, she asked hotly, that any reasonable woman would settle down to wearing the willow for a man who had treated her with absolutely heartless cruelty? And from that she went on to draw a comparison between Dr. Théophile and ferocious wild beasts—so much to the advantage of the wild beasts that Dr. Théophile incontinently bolted from the room! But the rumor never became more than a rumor—as it pretty certainly would have done had it been based in truth.

A year or so later, however, another piece of news

came up from Guadeloupe of such a nature that Dr. Théophile, by the first steamer leaving after his receipt of it, went journeying into the south. This was not a rumor at all. It was an explicit statement that his Angèle's father, as had happened earlier to his own father, had been overtaken by "sugar-planter's luck"—his debts had eaten up his fortune and his plantation had gone to the banks.

Dr. Théophile's first thought when this news came to him was a joyful thought, and joy was with him as he went on into the south: for at last the barrier which fate had raised between his love and his honor was swept away. To this ruined gentleman he was free to offer himself as a son-in-law; to this ruined gentleman's daughter he was free to declare openly the love that unceasingly had been hers. And he built up a very magnificent air-castle as the ship carried him onward through the tropic sunshine to his island haven in the tropic sea.

But when he reached that haven his air-castles came tumbling down about his ears! His Angèle and her father had left Guadeloupe, and no one could tell him whither they had gone. Tracking them to Havana was easy: but there—where you may take ship for France or for England or for a score of ports in English-speaking or Spanish-speaking America—the track disappeared. He did not give up his search lightly; but when, at last, he did give it up, and came back to New York again, he was at close quarters with despair.

And then Fortune, having thus done her bitter worst by Dr. Théophile, whipped about (as her way

is) and made a great bustle of befriending him: sending him, at the very moment when he was face to face with utter hopelessness, his long-expected inheritance from his uncle in France. Justly enough, he gave no thanks to Fortune for showing him her favor, as he had said she would show it, years after it would do him any good. By his own skill and by his own hard work, without any help from Fortune whatever, the standing-room that he had won for himself in New York at the outset had become easy and broad. So far as his own needs were concerned, he had no use for this belated inheritance—that would have made his life radiant had it only come in time.

But after his first sharp outburst of resentment against this good luck which had come too late to him, he accepted it thankfully—because it enabled him to realize a long-cherished project for the betterment of the broken brothers whom he served. Having received his French fortune, he abandoned his long-time lodgings in Macdougal Street and took possession of a big house in that same modest thoroughfare—and made there a shelter, half hospice and half hospital, which thenceforward became a sure refuge for those who went down on the firing-line of life's battle so friendless that there was no one to carry them to the rear.

In that pleasant resting-place the weary were refreshed and comforted until they could stand and fight again; and many near to dying—as Marie's grandmother had been—there were cared for tenderly and won back to life. As to the pension list and

the out-patient department of this establishment, not even Dr. Théophile himself could have given any trustworthy statistics of them. Put upon oath, he could have furnished no more than the vague information that their limits were his income and his strength to serve. But the thought of compiling such statistics did not occur to him. He was content to know that, following in the footsteps of San Juan de Dios, he had brought to dwell with him the sweetest and the tenderest of all the Madonnas, Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados—Our Lady of the Forsaken—and had made a home for her that would last as long as he himself should live.

VII

Yet while Dr. Théophile's inner nature thus was gentle and most pitiful, his outer nature was aggressively crotchetty—not to say severe. Up in Paradise, no doubt, Our Lady of the Forsaken and San Juan de Dios—knowing the sweet well-springs of his life—interchanged smiles now and then as they looked down from the golden battlements and beheld the crusty outside of him that was turned toward those who needed not his aid. For Dr. Théophile's attitude toward mankind in general was remonstrant; and as his argumentative habit was backed by a caustic wit, that made verbal combat a pleasure to him and bubble-pricking a delight, his position in ordinary society was very like that which among fishes is occupied by an electric eel. Save

for the certainty that it was coming, there never was any certainty as to how or where he would get in his paralyzing blow—though there always was the farther certainty that when that blow had been delivered the argument would be ended or the bubble would be resolved into very thin air!

But then, as I have said, he hit only those who were strong enough to hit back—and whoever did hit back, and so invited destruction, merely met the fate that such rashness deserved. Colonel Withersby, for instance—whose nature was both rash and pugnacious, and whose confirmed habit of blowing bubbles had depleted many pockets for the repletion of his own—had tried a throw with Dr. Théophile on various occasions in the early days of their acquaintance: until repeated discomfitures had convinced him that the throwing always was one way. And this military personage summed the situation in belicose metaphor when he asked of Don Anastasio: "What the —— is the good of having the drop on a man who somehow always has your scalp in his pocket before you can fire?" That Don Anastasio, to whom Colonel Withersby's florid speech at all times was confusing, perceived the meaning of this metaphor is improbable. But he made adequate reply to it by falling back on the vaguest and most useful phrase in his own rich language—saying impressively, as he raised his shoulders and turned the palms of his hands outward: "Sir, who knows?" But even in his cold moments of complete sobriety—which were very rare moments—Colonel Withersby bore no malice against Dr. Théo-

phile; and in his normal warm moments—when a broad kindliness begotten of many cocktails filled his nature with a generous glow—he was wont to declare his admiration for Dr. Théophile in liberal terms. "The Doc's all right," he would say a little thickly. "Nothin's wrong with the Doc—any more'n there is with a buzz-saw. Let a buzz-saw alone, and it 'll let you alone. Monkey with a buzz-saw, and it 'll get its work right in on you an' you'll be lookin' around on the floor for your scraps. Same way with the Doc—same way every time. But take him right, and he's a peach from the word go. He's about the whitest white man I ever knew, th' Doc is. There's not a fly on him from his head to his heels!"

Stated in varying terms, the views thus expressed by Colonel Withersby were general, as I have said, throughout the little circle which centred in the Casa Napoléon. And especially in the feminine portion of that circle was the feeling toward Dr. Théophile—and this in despite of his habitual jibing at women—a very cordial one. For a time, to be sure, after that conference in the sitting-room of the ex-presidents, there had been a marked chill in Madame's manner toward him; but, being founded in an impersonal animosity, her resentment wore off eventually and she gave him again his place in a warm corner of her heart. That she guarded with absolute strictness the facts of the story then confided to her is improbable—otherwise they scarcely would have been known, as they certainly were known, to Mrs. Rayford, and to

Polly Harrison, and to Mrs. Myrtle Vane: all of whom, rather to his astonishment, manifested an almost maternal solicitude for his welfare. And in talking among themselves, these ladies frankly avowed an affection for him that, could he have heard their avowals, would have filled him with a very lively surprise. Even Mrs. Mortimer, though not avowedly, shared in this feeling; which was the more remarkable because her actual disposition toward men was as cynical as was Dr. Théophile's declared disposition toward women; and, moreover, Mrs. Mortimer's cynicism was the outgrowth of a diffuse and varied experience of an eminently macadamizing sort. But a woman must be hardened quite out of all womanhood who has not sorrowing sympathy for a man whose life has been blighted by a melancholy misadventure in love.

Fortunately for himself, Dr. Théophile did not know that his broken heart thus was worn, in a way, upon his sleeve. Believing that this disordered organ was his own private property, he tried to keep the fracture hidden even from himself by pouring out for the good of the sorrowing and the suffering the loving charity with which its fragments abundantly were filled. To the fulness of his strength, to the fulness of his fortune, he ministered to the needs of his brothers who fell by the wayside friendless; and the more tenderly because from his own crushed happiness came forth to him an infinite pitifulness—even as the sweetest fragrance comes from trampled herbs. Among those broken brothers his healing presence was as a grace and a blessing

—and his rusty black garments and his panama hat, or the slouched felt hat that replaced it in winter, seemed to those of them who knew about such matters as the habit of one of the Orders vowed to the loving helping of the sick and weak and poor. Nor was this fancy wholly fanciful. Consciously he strove to walk in the sweet ways of San Juan de Dios; consciously he strove that Our Lady of the Forsaken should be well served.

And so the twenty years which had brought success to the Casa Napoléon, and which had brought Madame's burgundy to a pitch of perilous perfection, had gone sadly for Dr. Théophile but not bitterly—for into a life of loving helpfulness bitterness may not come. And because he thus had kept his nature sweet—had mellowed, not hardened, through that long season of sorrow—time had dealt very gently with him. There was a touch of gray about his temples, to be sure; but his crisp short beard, as black as ever, and his lean body, as vigorous as ever, gave no hint that he was turned of forty—with a year to spare on the wrong side. Blessings, as well as curses, come home to roost sometimes. Youth, and the tenderness which is a part of youth, had stayed by Dr. Théophile because of those rich deposits which for half a lifetime he had been making in the Bank of Grateful Hearts.

VIII

Monsieur Duvent, the dealer in the eminently respectable gaming establishment in South Fifth

Avenue, had few professional equals; and only on one occasion—when he was beguiled by the devil and Colonel Withersby into a disastrous encounter at cards with a certain Marques de Valdeflores—had he met a superior at any so-called game of chance. Nor was he at all squeamish in his choice of those upon whom he exercised his skill. Indeed—to quote Colonel Withersby, whose knowledge in the premises was extensive—he would not have hesitated, had opportunity arisen, to scoop the marrow out of his own grandfather's bones. This statement of the Colonel's, of course, was hyperbolic; but many simple-minded persons, who had been induced by a misplaced confidence in Monsieur Duvent's conception of the duties of hospitality to sit opposite to him at his own table, could have testified to its substantial truth.

Yet in despite of (or independently of) his professional instincts and methods, Monsieur Duvent had a heart—and on more than one occasion the amiable, though perhaps a little belated, workings of that kindly organ had brought him into humane relations with Dr. Théophile: to whom, in an unprofessional way, he made report of cases of sickness or of suffering which, in a professional way, had come under his notice—for which, indeed, he not infrequently was in part responsible. A man less learned in the curious contradictoriness of human nature than was Dr. Théophile might have been disposed to read a lecture now and then to Monsieur Duvent upon his too literal, not to say extreme, interpretation of a scriptural injunction:

which led him not only to keep his right and left hands in ignorance of each other's doings, but actually to exercise those members at cross-purposes. But Dr. Théophile had sounded the depths of too many hearts, and had found too many strata of underlying tenderness in the most hardened of them, for such phenomena to excite his resentment or even his surprise. Indeed, he had come—as we all come sooner or later: the more fortunate of us sooner—to the conviction that somewhere in every heart is a strain of gentleness and of sweetness that needs only to be found and to be developed to become a saving grace. And so, asking no questions as to the wounds which Monsieur Duvent's professional right hand, his dealing hand, might have inflicted, he never failed to respond cordially to that gentleman's appeals to assist his unprofessional left hand in caring for the hurt and the maimed.

These facts being premised, it is evident that there was not anything obviously fateful and portentous about Monsieur Duvent when, quite in the usual way, he called Dr. Théophile aside in the smoking-room of the Casa Napoléon one evening to ask for his usual charitable services in a case of the usual kind. But then Fate, as it operates in this queer world of ours, has a way of putting us off our guard by working along the most commonplace lines to results which are at once revolutionizing and overwhelming—as though actuated by a whimsical fancy for infusing always into our great joys and our great sorrows the inconsequent element of surprise. To Dr. Théophile—who would have been

justified in looking about him for joyful flaming characters on the smoking-room walls—there came no glad premonitions of approaching happiness as he listened gravely to Monsieur Duvent's statement of a case that in its broad outlines was wholly commonplace: an old man, very poor—and poorer because of his transactions with the bank over which Monsieur Duvent presided—who was lying ill and in need of a doctor's care. And Monsieur Duvent was of the opinion that even a doctor's care could not keep him long alive.

"For this illness which is upon him," the worthy gamester explained, "is not an active illness, but a fading out of life—because all that is worth living for is gone. What he needs, this poor monsieur, is not medicine, but new hope—and you cannot give him that. It is for the sake of his daughter that I would have you go to him. She will have comfort in seeing you do all that can be done; and what comfort can be given her she deserves—for she is a very honest woman — this brave mademoiselle. Many times she has come to me to beg that I would not permit her father to play. Others have done that, of course, and I must be the same to all. It is not my business to drive players from my table. I myself must live. But I have treated that poor monsieur with a tenderness! Time and again I have permitted him—this, you will understand, *Monsieur le Docteur*, is in strict confidence—to recoup completely; and then I have begged him in private to have no more to do with cards—with which, in truth, he is but a child. And always, in a night or

two, he has forced me to win back again the money that I have made him a present of, and more beside. For you see, Monsieur, when an old man takes to gaming it is a worse madness with him than when he takes to love. Moreover in the case of this old man, there is behind his madness for gaming the madness of despair."

Monsieur Duvent sighed a moralizing sigh and was silent for a moment. Then he went on: "I do not know the whole of this poor monsieur's history, and I am sure that I do not know his true name; but from what at times he has let drop about his past life, and from what his daughter, that excellent woman, has told me, I know a great deal. He comes from your own island of Guadeloupe, *Monsieur le Docteur*, and quite possibly you may have known him there in his better days. He was a rich man, a planter—until, as happens often in these later times, I am told, to your planters, his riches took wings to themselves and flew away."

As Monsieur Duvent mentioned the fact that this old man had a daughter, a curious thought had occurred to Dr. Théophile that had suggested to him—speaking metaphorically—the haziest possible glow of letters of hopeful promise upon the smoking-room wall; but when Monsieur Duvent added that these two came from the island of Guadeloupe, thus creating something much more positive in the way of a coincidence, a sudden thrill went through his heart that set hope to budding there and that made the faint glow of those letters of promise increase suddenly to a pale flame.

"I cannot say certainly," Monsieur Duvent answered, "but I know that it was a long while ago—more, a good deal more, than a dozen years. For that long he has been among my clients—and he did not come to me until the hope that brought him here had failed. He came to New York, you see—innocent that he was!—thinking that he would make another fortune. But men of his stamp who lose fortunes do not make them again. He has earned only the barest of bare livings, and not always that. Had not his daughter worked also, and very hard, they would have starved. You can see how it would be with him. Without the strength and the energy of youth a broken man cannot hope to mend himself. It is impossible. At last he realized the hopelessness of what he was doing—and then he took to play. His case is a very common one. Many of my clients come to me in that way. But from the time that he gave up hoping, and that is natural too, his life has been slipping away from him—until now, at last, it is almost gone." And in a moralizing tone the excellent Monsieur Duvent concluded: "The uphill march of a young man is hard, and sometimes bitter; but the downhill march of an old man is far harder—and would be bitter beyond words were it not for the certainty that the end of it, where rest is, cannot be far off—no doubt this poor monsieur finds a little comfort in knowing that he is almost at the bottom of the hill, and that is why I say that your medicines cannot save him, *Monsieur le Docteur.* He is an old man, and of broken fortunes, and of broken hopes. When we

are like that, and death comes close to us—cheering us with his promise of deep rest and deep forgetfulness—we do not drive him away."

Even had Dr. Théophile been in his normally argumentative mood he would not have taken issue with this piece of drearily sound philosophy; for he knew (as all of us sad elders know) that while youth may make a good fight against hopelessness and death, and while hopefulness may make a good fight against death and age, when age and hopelessness are linked together death meets with no resistance—because he comes not as an enemy but as a friend.

But Dr. Théophile's mood just then was as far from normal as possible. On the foundation which Monsieur Duvent had given him he was building air-castles once more—air-castles of a sort that he never had dreamed would rise again; into his long hopeless heart a great hope was flowing warmly; on the wall the words of promise shone in a glaring blaze! Yet doubtingly, tremblingly, he asked the question the answer to which would make his air-castles realities or would bring them once more tumbling down about his ears.

"Do you know, monsieur, the name of this—this good woman, the daughter?"

"But yes, certainly. I have heard her father say it a hundred times. That brave mademoiselle is called Angèle."

And so, by the grace of Our Lady of the Forsaken—who thus happily brought happiness to the most

faithful of all her servants—Dr. Théophile's air-castles stood fast!

IX

As to the farther events of that glad evening—after Monsieur Duvent, ceasing to be an instrument of Fate, had gone to his respectable gaming establishment and had left Dr. Théophile to work out the easy remainder of his destiny in his own way—they more graciously may be imagined than described. I think that even Our Lady of the Forsaken and San Juan de Dios—with tenderly smiling faces and eyes a little tear-dimmed—turned away purposely that night from the golden parapet of heaven: fearful lest they should peer too curiously into the poignant happiness of two supremely joyful hearts. No doubt, however, those sainted comforters of the despairing rejoiced in a heavenly way together over the happiness that they were too nice to spy upon: over the still young lives which triumphant love had made radiant and wholly youthful; over the old life that had been saved by newly upspringing hopefulness for many a year of blessed restfulness in peace.

But while touching thus lightly upon the climax of that wondrous evening, which in its surcharge of joyfulness almost made up to Dr. Théophile for all his near a score of sorrowing years, I cannot ignore the curious perplexity which beset him when, at the end of it, he was walking homeward slowly beneath the stars. Being only a man, he was at a

loss that night—and indeed, was at a loss always—to reduce to any sort of logical consistence the irreconcilable quantities in the conduct of his Angèle: who had come to New York (the move thither had been made at her instance) expressly to be near him, yet who through the many years that they had dwelt almost as neighbors in that city resolutely had kept him out of her life. By way of making this tangle still more of a tangle, she had explained that of course he would understand that it was her love for him that had held her away from him; and had put the finishing touch to his utter bewilderment by saying in a tone of tender regret and longing as they parted:

"My Théophile—think of all these years which we have lost!"

In a general way, and with many reservations, he applied to Madame for an elucidation of this feminine mystery—when he had finished telling her, at the conference that they had the next day in the sitting-room of the ex-presidents, about the miracle of happiness which had turned his sorrow into joy. But Madame, so far from enlightening, only complicated the matter by declaring with a prompt positiveness that any woman would have done precisely the same thing under the same circumstances; and by way of a rider to this obscure statement, volunteered the information that he still was a baby fool! After which Madame expressed her delight in Dr. Théophile's good fortune, greatly to his confusion, by falling weeping into his arms; and then by laughing in the affectionate way that only

a Southern Frenchwoman can laugh; and then by kissing him on both cheeks a dozen times!

Don Anastasio, being summoned to hear the good news, was less tempestuous than Madame in his expressions of congratulation, but what he said came very straight from his heart. And he made his speech, delivered with a Spanish dignity and a Mexican grace, by quoting from the second law of the First Partida of the Wise Alonzo the selfsame words with which he had clinched matters with Madame herself twenty years before: "This order of matrimony was by God's own self established, and for this reason it is the most noble and the most honorable of the Seven Sacraments of the Holy Church. And therefore it should be kept and honored, because it is the first sacrament that was made and ordained by God Himself in Paradise—which Paradise hath ever since remained marked out as its natural abiding-place and home!"

It is not surprising that Dr. Théophile just then was in cordial accord with this handsome implication on the part of the King of Castile that Paradise and matrimony are interconvertible terms; but I have pleasure in calling attention to the fact that Don Anastasio made his quotation boldly and heartily after a successful matrimonial experiment continued through twenty years. Indeed, as he finished it, he gave it an added point and emphasis by putting his arm around Madame's ample waist with a gallantry that made Madame blush quite delightfully and was altogether pleasing to behold.

As to the excitement that broke forth in the Casa

Napoléon a little later—when Madame, under instructions from Dr. Théophile, had bruited the wonderful news abroad—it is not too much to say that a hurricane direct from Dr. Théophile's own island of Guadeloupe, rending and riving as hurricanes do, would have made less commotion there than did the announcement that this seemingly most celibate of celibates was to be married at last! And the gauntlet of congratulations which Dr. Théophile had to run would have driven him quite distracted had not the sincerity of the affection thus variously manifested for him touched his heart.

That Colonel Withersby—who happened to be in the flush state immediately succeeding a (to him) highly successful tramway promotion—set up champagne for everybody, goes without saying; but that so maculate a gentleman as was the Colonel had a genuine choke in his voice when he gave the "Doc's" health and happiness proves that even a person spotted all over with the stains left by manifold shady transactions still may have an appreciable residuum of warm and honest feeling in what he is pleased to call his soul. Monsieur Duvent, feeling that as the instrument of Fate something out of the ordinary was required of him, handsomely devoted his commissions upon an evening of exceptional winnings to the purchase of a bouquet very little smaller than an ordinary omnibus; and this he sent with his card attached to it bearing the inscription: "*Hommage respectueux et félicitations bien cordiales à la brave Mademoiselle Angèle.*" And Monsieur Duvent, with a gamester's superstitions in such mat-

ters, fully believed that his gallant act was the direct cause that night of the greatest run of luck in favor of the dealer that his bank had ever known. Miss Violet Bream and Mr. Claude Dunbar—that is to say, Ned and Polly Harrison—naturally expressed their sympathetic pleasure by sending an order for a box at the theatre where they were playing a brilliant engagement: and made Dr. Théophile wretchedly uncomfortable, and his Angèle quite absurdly happy, by focussing the entire performance on them —as though they were royalty itself! And Mrs. Myrtle Vane, as on a previous notable occasion, nobly sacrificed her interest to her friendship and did not make a story out of it all for the Sunday paper that she served with so earnest an illiterary zeal. And the *chef*, having a nice taste in matters of gallantry, quite upset Dr. Théophile's digestion by serving to him a magnificent pudding—on the icing of which, done tastefully in pink sugar, was a harp-playing angel with prodigious wings. Beneath which artistic creation was this legend in blue sugar letters: *Son Ange gardien.*

But from the humbler element of the Casa Napoléon came the demonstrations of grateful affection which most closely touched Dr. Théophile's heart. Léon, the one-eyed waiter—fortunately ignorant of Monsieur Duvent's floral outburst—brought him a single beautiful rose, and begged that he would give it to the beautiful lady who was gladding his life. Telésforo, the Cuban negro, with a most impressive air of mystery, presented him his own most cherished possession: a Voodoo amulet

that was a sovereign protection against every human and superhuman ill. And Marie, the often too frivolous chambermaid, quite solemnly brought her old grandmother to bless him; and Marie, with a sob in her voice, explained that the *bon Dieu* surely would give heed to this blessing from one whose life Dr. Théophile had saved.

Thus did these friends of Dr. Théophile's, and other of his friends in the wider circle to whom I can but refer generally, prove to him their loving thankfulness. Thus was there declared to him a dividend upon the deposits that for half his lifetime he had been making in the Bank of Grateful Hearts.

X

Nobly swathed in cobwebs and extravagantly coated with dust, the very last bottles of the famous burgundy were served at Dr. Théophile's wedding breakfast; gracing—according to Madame's notions, sanctifying—in their maturely mellow perfection the realization of the tenderest and the brightest of all the hopes to which those hopeful toasts had been drunk in the first bottle, young and fiery, that ever had come out of the bin.

Madame's eyes dimmed a little as with her own hands she lifted these veterans from their long resting-place and tenderly bestowed them in their sacrificial baskets. Not that she grudged the gift that she was making to crown fitly Dr. Théophile's happiness—Madame came of an open-handed race, and her warm heart was all generosity—nor that

in her sadness was precisely pain. But as she turned away from the empty bin, over the filling of which she had presided twenty years before in sanguine expectation of coming good fortune, she could not but feel a keen natural sorrow—for all that so large a part of her bright hopes had become realities—as with a curiously sudden completeness she realized how much of her life was gone. It is that way with all of us: when some sharply obtrudent fact brings an abrupt consciousness that, all unconsciously, we have drifted far past life's meridian; that the years which (as it seems to us) only a little while ago were our rosy future now are our gray past. We may know that we have grown mellower, richer, tenderer; that we have achieved, even, a subtly perfected excellence—but with a sudden shock we know also that this means a loss of fire and vigor: and the coming, presently, of the basket: and then the drawing of the cork.

It would be absurd, however, even to suggest that any such reasoned chain of sombre reflections was in Madame's naturally cheery heart as she set in order her votive offering to Dr. Théophile's happiness. The farthest that her melancholy went was to regret with a lively Toulousian energy that she had scored twenty years to the bad since she and Don Anastasio had begun their happy dual venture in matrimony and hotel-keeping, and that Don Anastasio was beginning to get old. Being a Frenchwoman, and a Southern Frenchwoman at that, the thought never occurred to Madame that she was beginning to get old herself.

Nor, indeed, would any reasonably mature person, with half an eye for what a plumply comfortable little round woman ought to be, have ventured to suggest that Madame and old age even were nodding acquaintances—as she sat at that dream of a wedding breakfast (the making of it had cost her many sleepless nights, and the *chef*, according to the impudent Marie, had gone gray over it) with Dr. Théophile on her right hand. On that festive occasion, as on many previous and also on many subsequent festive occasions, Madame was as radiant—to quote Don Anastasio's gallant simile—as a budding rose!

As to the glad youthfulness of the bride and groom, Madame declared that they surely had been to the Fountain of Youth together; and Don Anastasio —quoting broadly from the *Siete Partidas*—made the wiser general assertion that age cannot find lodgement in happy and wholly unselfish hearts. After all, though, the reasonably mature person already mentioned would not have drawn upon either the Fountain of Youth or a royal philosopher of the thirteenth century to account for the youthfulness of two people, suddenly become supremely happy, one of whom was only a year worse than forty, and the other barely thirty-seven years old. Yet it is true that neither of them looked even their insignificantly few years. Brides, when they are happy brides, never do look their years; and Dr. Théophile—to the abiding wonder of all who knew him—had abandoned his panama hat and his jaunty short frock-coat for a high silk hat of a dazzling shininess and

for a coat of such opulent length that the tails of it almost tickled his heels! Thus resplendently arrayed, and with his crisp black beard trimmed to a nicety, he would have passed for thirty—as Madame heartily assured him in the most handsome terms. His own feelings in the matter—as he looked across the table at his Angèle, seated beside Don Anastasio, and saw her with his lover's eyes precisely as he remembered her on the other side of those desert twenty years—was that Madame's compliment erred on the side of sincerity. She would have come closer to his own calculations in the premises had she said that he would pass for twenty-one! Don Anastasio throughout that genial festival glowed with a cheerful kindliness that fairly taxed the *Siete Partidas* to the uppermost to supply him with quotations appropriate to the expression of his benevolent thoughts. Indeed, his speech so bristled with the wisdom of the Wise Alonzo that it was quite a relief to the entire company when Colonel Withersby—being unduly primed with preliminary cocktails—went off prematurely with a toast to the "Doc" as "the cleanest white man, ladies and gentlemen, that ever I've laid eyes on," and to his bride as "the daisiest daisy that God ever made." Coming with a swish into the midst of Don Anastasio's elegant and stately phrasings of thirteenth-century wisdom, and fairly across the hawse of the Wise Alonzo, the Colonel's breezy contemporaneous utterance was quite in the way of a refreshing interpolation of strictly modern metaphors and ideas.

But it was Alonzo the Wise, of course, who had

the final innings: when, in its due season, the toast of the bride and groom was given formally by Don Anastasio after the glasses had been charged with the heroic burgundy, exquisitely fragrant, and mellow with its twenty years of treasured memories of the sunny Dijon hills.

I shall not attempt to give the whole of Don Anastasio's address—rather is it simpler to refer the reader direct to the *Siete Partidas*, wherein the pith of it, though not its warm-hearted friendliness, is to be found. But the very end of it was in these words: "Therefore I say to you that these our well-loved friends, who to-day are joined together by that first sacrament made and ordained by God Himself in Paradise, and who now are come after long sorrow into happiness, have earned by their right living the reward that has come to them, and also the grace of God's blessing—even as is declared in the fourth title of the ninety-seventh law of the First Partida of the Wise Alonzo, which readeth: 'To do well is so great a thing, and so good, that not only do men by it conquer the world and compass the accomplishments which they desire, but also—even in their lifetime—they gain that which is over everything: the rewarding love of God.'"

THE END